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SOME IMAGIST POETS

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SOME IMAGIST POETS

AN ANTHOLOGY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE

In March, 1914, a volume appeared entitled "Des Imagistes." It was a collection of the work of various young poets, presented together as a school. This school has been widely discussed by those interested in new movements in the arts, and has already become a household word. Differences of taste and judgment, however, have arisen among the contributors to that book; growing tendencies are forcing them along different paths. Those of us whose work appears in this volume have therefore decided to publish our collection under a new title, and we have been joined by two or three poets who did not contribute to the first volume, our wider scope making this possible.

In this new book we have followed a slightly different arrangement to that of the former Anthology. Instead of an arbitrary selection by an editor, each poet has been permitted to represent himself by the work he considers his best, the only stipulation being that it should not yet have appeared in book form. A sort of informal committee — consisting of more than half the authors here represented — have arranged the book and decided what should be printed and

what omitted, but, as a general rule, the poets have been allowed absolute freedom in this direction, limitations of space only being imposed upon them. Also, to avoid any appearance of precedence, they have been put in alphabetical order.

As it has been suggested that much of the misunderstanding of the former volume was due to the fact that we did not explain ourselves in a preface, we have thought it wise to tell the public what our aims are, and why we are banded together between one set of covers.

The poets in this volume do not represent a clique. Several of them are personally unknown to the others, but they are united by certain common principles, arrived at independently. These principles are not new; they have fallen into desuetude. They are the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature, and they are simply these: —

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.

2. To create new rhythms — as the expression of new moods — and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may

often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.

3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.

4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.

5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.

6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

The subject of free-verse is too complicated to be discussed here. We may say briefly, that we attach the term to all that increasing amount of writing whose cadence is more marked, more definite, and closer knit than that of prose, but which is not so violently nor so obviously accented as the so-called "regular verse." We refer those interested in the question to

the Greek Melic poets, and to the many excellent French studies on the subject by such distinguished and well-equipped authors as Remy de Gourmont, Gustave Kahn, Georges Duhamel, Charles Vildrac, Henri Ghéon, Robert de Souza, André Spire, etc.

We wish it to be clearly understood that we do not represent an exclusive artistic sect ; we publish our work together because of mutual artistic sympathy, and we propose to bring out our coöperative volume each year for a short term of years, until we have made a place for ourselves and our principles such as we desire.

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RICHARD ALDINGTON

RICHARD ALDINGTON

CHILDHOOD

I

THE bitterness, the misery, the wretchedness of childhood
Put me out of love with God.
I can't believe in God's goodness;
I can believe
In many avenging gods.
Most of all I believe
In gods of bitter dullness,
Cruel local gods
Who seared my childhood.

II

I've seen people put
A chrysalis in a match-box,
"To see," they told me, "what sort of moth would come."
But when it broke its shell
It slipped and stumbled and fell about its prison
And tried to climb to the light
For space to dry its wings.

That 's how I was.
Somebody found my chrysalis
And shut it in a match-box.
My shrivelled wings were beaten,
Shed their colours in dusty scales
Before the box was opened
For the moth to fly.

And then it was too late,
Because the beauty a child has,
And the beautiful things it learns before its birth,
Were shed, like moth-scales, from me.

III

I hate that town;
I hate the town I lived in when I was little;
I hate to think of it.
There were always clouds, smoke, rain
In that dingy little valley.
It rained; it always rained.
I think I never saw the sun until I was nine —
And then it was too late;
Everything's too late after the first seven years.

That long street we lived in
Was duller than a drain
And nearly as dingy.
There were the big College
And the pseudo-Gothic town-hall.
There were the sordid provincial shops —
The grocer's, and the shops for women,
The shop where I bought transfers,
And the piano and gramaphone shop
Where I used to stand
Staring at the huge shiny pianos and at the pictures
Of a white dog looking into a gramaphone.

How dull and greasy and grey and sordid it was!
On wet days — it was always wet —
I used to kneel on a chair
And look at it from the window.

The dirty yellow trams
Dragged noisily along
With a clatter of wheels and bells
And a humming of wires overhead.
They threw up the filthy rain-water from the hollow lines
And then the water ran back
Full of brownish foam bubbles.

There was nothing else to see —
It was all so dull —
Except a few grey legs under shiny black umbrellas
Running along the grey shiny pavements;
Sometimes there was a waggon
Whose horses made a strange loud hollow sound
With their hoofs
Through the silent rain.

And there was a grey museum
Full of dead birds and dead insects and dead animals
And a few relics of the Romans — dead also.
There was the sea-front,
A long asphalt walk with a bleak road beside it,
Three piers, a row of houses,
And a salt dirty smell from the little harbour.

I was like a moth —
Like one of those grey Emperor moths
Which flutter through the vines at Capri.
And that damned little town was my match-box,
Against whose sides I beat and beat
Until my wings were torn and faded, and dingy
As that damned little town.

IV

At school it was just as dull as that dull High Street.
They taught me pothooks —
I wanted to be alone, although I was so little,
Alone, away from the rain, the dingyness, the dullness,
Away somewhere else —

The town was dull;
The front was dull;
The High Street and the other street were dull —
And there was a public park, I remember,
And that was damned dull too,
With its beds of geraniums no one was allowed to pick,
And its clipped lawns you were n't allowed to walk on,
And the gold-fish pond you must n't paddle in,
And the gate made out of a whale's jaw-bones,
And the swings, which were for "Board-School children,"
And its gravel paths.

And on Sundays they rang the bells,
From Baptist and Evangelical and Catholic churches.
They had the Salvation Army.
I was taken to a High Church;
The parson's name was Mowbray,
"Which is a good name but he thinks too much of it —"
That's what I heard people say.

I took a little black book
To that cold, grey, damp, smelling church,
And I had to sit on a hard bench,
Wriggle off it to kneel down when they sang psalms,
And wriggle off it to kneel down when they prayed—
And then there was nothing to do
Except to play trains with the hymn-books.

There was nothing to see,
Nothing to do,
Nothing to play with,
Except that in an empty room upstairs
There was a large tin box
Containing reproductions of the Magna Charta,
Of the Declaration of Independence
And of a letter from Raleigh after the Armada.
There were also several packets of stamps,
Yellow and blue Guatemala parrots,
Blue stags and red baboons and birds from Sarawak,
Indians and Men-of-war
From the United States,
And the green and red portraits
Of King Francobollo
Of Italy.

RICHARD ALDINGTON

v

I don't believe in God.
I do believe in avenging gods
Who plague us for sins we never sinned
But who avenge us.

That 's why I 'll never have a child,
Never shut up a chrysalis in a match-box
For the moth to spoil and crush its bright colours,
Beating its wings against the dingy prison-wall.

THE POPLAR

WHY do you always stand there shivering
Between the white stream and the road?

The people pass through the dust
On bicycles, in carts, in motor-cars;
The waggoners go by at dawn;
The lovers walk on the grass path at night.

Stir from your roots, walk, poplar!
You are more beautiful than they are.

I know that the white wind loves you,
Is always kissing you and turning up
The white lining of your green petticoat.
The sky darts through you like blue rain,
And the grey rain drips on your flanks
And loves you.
And I have seen the moon
Slip his silver penny into your pocket
As you straightened your hair;
And the white mist curling and hesitating
Like a bashful lover about your knees.

RICHARD ALDINGTON

I know you, poplar;
I have watched you since I was ten.
But if you had a little real love,
A little strength,
You would leave your nonchalant idle lovers
And go walking down the white road
Behind the waggoners.

There are beautiful beeches down beyond the hill.
Will you always stand there shivering?

ROUND/POND

WATER ruffled and speckled by galloping wind
Which puffs and spurts it into tiny pashing breakers
Dashed with lemon/yellow afternoon sunlight.
The shining of the sun upon the water
Is like a scattering of gold crocus/petals
In a long wavering irregular flight.

The water is cold to the eye
As the wind to the cheek.

In the budding chestnuts
Whose sticky buds glimmer and are half/burst open
The starlings make their clitter/clatter;
And the blackbirds in the grass
Are getting as fat as the pigeons.

Too/hoo, this is brave;
Even the cold wind is seeking a new mistress.

DAISY

" Plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,
Nunc . . ."

CATULLUS.

You were my playmate by the sea.
We swam together.
Your girl's body had no breasts.

We found prawns among the rocks;
We liked to feel the sun and to do nothing;
In the evening we played games with the others.

It made me glad to be by you.

Sometimes I kissed you,
And you were always glad to kiss me;
But I was afraid — I was only fourteen.

And I had quite forgotten you,
You and your name.

To-day I pass through the streets.
She who touches my arm and talks with me

Is — who knows? — Helen of Sparta,
Dryope, Laodamia. . . .

And there are you
A whore in Oxford Street.

RICHARD ALDINGTON

EPIGRAMS

A GIRL

You were that clear Sicilian fluting
That pains our thought even now.
You were the notes
Of cold fantastic grief
Some few found beautiful.

NEW LOVE

She has new leaves
After her dead flowers,
Like the little almond-tree
Which the frost hurt.

OCTOBER

The beech-leaves are silver
For lack of the tree's blood.

At your kiss my lips
Become like the autumn beech-leaves.

THE FAUN SEES SNOW FOR THE FIRST TIME

Zeus,
Brazen-thunder-hurler,
Cloud-whirler, son-of-Kronos,
Send vengeance on these Oreads
Who strew
White frozen flecks of mist and cloud
Over the brown trees and the tufted grass
Of the meadows, where the stream
Runs black through shining banks
Of bluish white.

Zeus,
Are the halls of heaven broken up
That you flake down upon me
Feather-strips of marble?

Dis and Styx!
When I stamp my hoof
The frozen-cloud-specks jam into the cleft
So that I reel upon two slippery points. . . .

Fool, to stand here cursing
When I might be running!

LEMURES

In Nineveh
And beyond Nineveh
In the dusk
They were afraid.

In Thebes of Egypt
In the dusk
They chanted of them to the dead.

In my Lesbos and Achaia
Where the God dwelt
We knew them.

Now men say "They are not":
But in the dusk
Ere the white sun comes —
A gay child that bears a white candle —
I am afraid of their rustling,
Of their terrible silence,
The menace of their secrecy.

H. D.

H. D.

THE POOL

ARE you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you — banded one?

THE GARDEN

I

You are clear,
O rose, cut in rock,
hard as the descent of hail.

I could scrape the colour
from the petal,
like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.

If I could stir
I could break a tree,
I could break you.

II

O wind,
rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
rend it sideways.

Fruit can not drop
through this thick air:

H. D.

fruit can not fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

Cut the heat,
plough through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

SEA LILY

Reed,
slashed and torn,
but doubly rich —
such great heads as yours
drift upon temple-steps,
but you are shattered
in the wind.

Myrtle-bark
is flecked from you,
scales are dashed
from your stem,
sand cuts your petal,
furrows it with hard edge,
like flint
on a bright stone.

Yet though the whole wind
slash at your bark,
you are lifted up,
aye — though it hiss
to cover you with froth.

SEA IRIS

I

WEED, moss-weed,
root tangled in sand,
sea-iris, brittle flower,
one petal like a shell
is broken,
and you print a shadow
like a thin twig.

Fortunate one,
scented and stinging,
rigid myrrh-bud,
camphor-flower,
sweet and salt — you are wind
in our nostrils.

II

Do the murex-fishers
drench you as they pass?
Do your roots drag up colour
from the sand?
Have they slipped gold under you;
rivets of gold?

Band of iris-flowers
above the waves,
You are painted blue,
painted like a fresh prow
stained among the salt weeds.

SEA ROSE

ROSE, harsh rose,
marred and with stint of petals,
meagre flower, thin,
sparse of leaf,

more precious
than a wet rose,
single on a stem—
you are caught in the drift.

Stunted, with small leaf,
you are flung on the sands,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand
that drives in the wind.

Can the spice-rose
drip such acrid fragrance
hardened in a leaf?

OREAD

Whirl up, sea —
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash your great pines
On our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.

ORION DEAD

[*Artemis speaks*]

THE cornel-trees
uplift from the furrows,
the roots at their bases
strike lower through the barley-sprays.

So arise and face me.
I am poisoned with the rage of song.

I once pierced the flesh
of the wild-deer,
now am I afraid to touch
the blue and the gold-veined hyacinths?

I will tear the full flowers
and the little heads
of the grape-hyacinths.
I will strip the life from the bulb
until the ivory layers
lie like narcissus petals
on the black earth.

Arise,
lest I bend an ash-tree
into a taut bow,
and slay — and tear
all the roots from the earth.

The cornel-wood blazes
and strikes through the barley-sprays,
but I have lost heart for this.

I break a staff.
I break the tough branch.
I know no light in the woods.
I have lost pace with the winds.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

THE BLUE SYMPHONY

I

THE darkness rolls upward.
The thick darkness carries with it
Rain and a ravel of cloud.
The sun comes forth upon earth.

Palely the dawn
Leaves me facing timidly
Old gardens sunken:
And in the gardens is water.

Sombre wreck — autumnal leaves;
Shadowy roofs
In the blue mist,
And a willow-branch that is broken.

O old pagodas of my soul, how you glittered across
green trees!

Blue and cool:
Blue, tremulously,
Blow faint puffs of smoke
Across sombre pools.
The damp green smell of rotted wood;
And a heron that cries from out the water.

II

Through the upland meadows
I go alone.
For I dreamed of someone last night
Who is waiting for me.

Flower and blossom, tell me do you know of her?

Have the rocks hidden her voice?
They are very blue and still.

Long upward road that is leading me,
Light hearted I quit you,
For the long loose ripples of the meadow-grass
Invite me to dance upon them.

Quivering grass
Daintily poised
For her foot's tripping.

O blown clouds, could I only race up like you,
Oh, the last slopes that are sun-drenched and steep!

Look, the sky!
Across black valleys
Rise blue-white aloft
Jagged, unwrinkled mountains, ranges of death.

Solitude. Silence.

III

One chuckles by the brook for me:
One rages under the stone.
One makes a spout of his mouth,
One whispers — one is gone.

One over there on the water
Spreads cold ripples
For me
Enticingly.

The vast dark trees
Flow like blue veils
Of tears
Into the water.

Sour sprites,
Moaning and chuckling,
What have you hidden from me?

"In the palace of the blue stone she lies forever
Bound hand and foot."

Was it the wind
That rattled the reeds together?

Dry reeds,
A faint shiver in the grasses.

IV

On the left hand there is a temple:
And a palace on the right-hand side.
Foot-passengers in scarlet
Pass over the glittering tide.

Under the bridge
The old river flows
Low and monotonous
Day after day.

I have heard and have seen
All the news that has been:
Autumn's gold and Spring's green!

Now in my palace
I see foot-passengers
Crossing the river:
Pilgrims of Autumn
In the afternoons.

Lotus pools:
Petals in the water.
Such are my dreams.

For me silks are outspread.
I take my ease, unthinking.

V

And now the lowest pine-branch
Is drawn across the disk of the sun.
Old friends who will forget me soon
I must go on,
Towards those blue death-mountains
I have forgot so long.

In the marsh grasses
There lies forever
My last treasure,
With the hope of my heart.

The ice is glazing over,
Torn lanterns flutter,
On the leaves is snow.

In the frosty evening
Toll the old bell for me
Once, in the sleepy temple.

Perhaps my soul will hear.

Afterglow:
Before the stars peep
I shall creep out into darkness.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

LONDON EXCURSION

'BUS

GREAT walls of green,
City that is afar.

We gallop along
Alert and penetrating,
Roads open about us,
Housetops keep at a distance.

Soft-curling tendrils,
Swim backwards from our image:
We are a red bulk,
Projecting the angular city, in shadows, at our feet.

Black coarse-squared shapes,
Hump and growl and assemble.
It is the city that takes us to itself,
Vast thunder riding down strange skies.

An arch under which we slide
Divides our lives for us:
After we have passed it

We know we have left something behind
We shall not see again.

Passivity,
Gravity,
Are changed into hesitating, clanking pistons and
wheels.
The trams come whooping up one by one,
Yellow pulse-beats spreading through darkness.

Music-hall posters squall out:
The passengers shrink together,
I enter indelicately into all their souls.

It is a glossy skating rink,
On which winged spirals clasp and bend each other:
And suddenly slide backwards towards the centre,
After a too-brief release.

A second arch is a wall
To separate our souls from rotted cables
Of stale greenness.

A shadow cutting off the country from us,
Out of it rise red walls.

Yet I revolt: I bend, I twist myself,
I curl into a million convolutions:
Pink shapes without angle,
Anything to be soft and woolly,
Anything to escape.

Sudden lurch of clamours,
Two more viaducts
Stretch out red yokes of steel,
Crushing my rebellion.

My soul
Shrieking
Is jolted forwards by a long hot bar —
Into direct distances.
It pierces the small of my back.

APPROACH

Only this morning I sang of roses;
Now I see with a swift stare,
The city forcing up through the air
Black cubes close piled and some half-crumbling over.

My roses are battered into pulp:
And there swells up in me

Sudden desire for something changeless,
Thrusts of sunless rock
Unmelted by hissing wheels.

ARRIVAL

HERE is too swift a movement,
The rest is too still.

It is a red sea
Licking
The housefronts.

They quiver gently
From base to summit.
Ripples of impulse run through them,
Flattering resistance.

Soon they will fall;
Already smoke yearns upward.
Clouds of dust,
Crash of collapsing cubes.

I prefer deeper patience,
Monotony of stalled beasts.
O angle-builders,

Vainly have you prolonged your effort,
For I descend amid you,
Past rungs and slopes of curving slippery steel.

WALK

SUDDEN struggle for foothold on the pavement,
Familiar ascension.

I do not heed the city any more,
It has given me a duty to perform.
I pass along nonchalantly,
Insinuating myself into self-baffling movements.
Impalpable charm of back streets
In which I find myself:
Cool spaces filled with shadow.
Passers-by, white hammocks in the sunlight.

Bulging outcrush into old tumult;
Attainment, as of a narrow harbour,
Of some shop forgotten by traffic
With cool-corridored walls.

'BUS-TOP

BLACK shapes bending,
Taxicabs crush in the crowd.

The tops are each a shining square
Shuttles that steadily press through woolly fabric.

Drooping blossom,
Gas-standards over
Spray out jingling tumult
Of white-hot rays.

Monotonous domes of bowler-hats
Vibrate in the heat.

Silently, easily we sway through braying traffic,
Down the crowded street.
The tumult crouches over us,
Or suddenly drifts to one side.

TRANSPOSITION

I AM blown like a leaf
Hither and thither.
The city about me
Resolves itself into sound of many voices,
Rustling and fluttering,
Leaves shaken by the breeze.

A million forces ignore me, I know not why,
I am drunken with it all.

Suddenly I feel an immense will
Stored up hitherto and unconscious till this instant.
Projecting my body
Across a street, in the face of all its traffic.

I dart and dash:
I do not know why I go.
These people watch me,
I yield them my adventure.

Lazily I lounge through labyrinthine corridors,
And with eyes suddenly altered,
I peer into an office I do not know,
And wonder at a startled face that penetrates my own.

Roses — pavement —
I will take all this city away with me —
People — uproar — the pavement jostling and
flickering —
Women with incredible eyelids:
Dandies in spats:
Hard-faced throng discussing me — I know them all.
I will take them away with me,
I insistently rob them of their essence,
I must have it all before night,
To sing amid my green.

I glide out unobservant
In the midst of the traffic
Blown like a leaf
Hither and thither,
Till the city resolves itself into a clamour of voices,
Crying hollowly, like the wind rustling through the forest,
Against the frozen housefronts:
Lost in the glitter of a million movements.

PERIPETEIA

I CAN no longer find a place for myself:
I go.

There are too many things to detain me,
But the force behind is reckless.

Noise, uproar, movement
Slide me outwards,
Black sleet shivering
Down red walls.

In thick jungles of green, this gyration,
My centrifugal folly,
Through roaring dust and futility spattered,
Will find its own repose.

Golden lights will gleam out sullenly into silence,
Before I return.

MID-FLIGHT

We rush, a black throng,
Straight upon darkness:
Motes scattered
By the arc's rays.

Over the bridge fluttering,
It is theatre-time,
No one heeds.

Lost amid greenness
We will sleep all night;
And in the morning
Coming forth, we will shake wet wings
Over the settled dust of to-day.

The city hurls its cobbled streets after us,
To drive us faster.

We must attain the night
Before endless processions
Of lamps

Push us back.
A clock with quivering hands
Leaps to the trajectory-angle of our departure.

We leave behind pale traces of achievement:
Fires that we kindled but were too tired to put out,
Broad gold fans brushing softly over dark walls,
Stifled uproar of night.

We are already cast forth:
The signal of our departure
Jerks down before we have learned we are to go.

STATION

We descend
Into a wall of green.
Straggling shapes:
Afterwards none are seen.

I find myself
Alone.
I look back:
The city has grown.

One grey wall
Windowed, unlit.

Heavily, night
Crushes the face of it.

I go on.
My memories freeze
Like birds' cry
In hollow trees.

I go on.
Up and outright
To the hostility
Of night.

F. S. FLINT

F. S. FLINT

TREES

Elm trees
and the leaf the boy in me hated
long ago —
rough and sandy.

Poplars
and their leaves,
tender, smooth to the fingers,
and a secret in their smell
I have forgotten.

Oaks
and forest glades,
heart aching with wonder, fear:
their bitter mast.

Willows
and the scented beetle
we put in our handkerchiefs;
and the roots of one

that spread into a river :
nakedness, water and joy.

Hawthorn,
white and odorous with blossom,
framing the quiet fields,
and swaying flowers and grasses,
and the hum of bees.

Oh, these are the things that are with me now,
in the town ;
and I am grateful
for this minute of my manhood.

LUNCH

FRAIL beauty,
green, gold and incandescent whiteness,
narcissi, daffodils,
you have brought me Spring and longing,
wistfulness,
in your irradiance.

Therefore, I sit here
among the people,
dreaming,
and my heart aches
with all the hawthorn blossom,
the bees humming,
the light wind upon the poplars,
and your warmth and your love
and your eyes . . .
they smile and know me.

MALADY

I MOVE;
perhaps I have wakened;
this is a bed;
this is a room;
and there is light . . .

Darkness!

Have I performed
the dozen acts or so
that make me the man
men see?

The door opens,
and on the landing—
quiet!
I can see nothing: the pain, the weariness!

Stairs, banisters, a handrail:
all indistinguishable.
One step farther down or up,
and why?
But up is harder. Down!

Down to this white blur;
it gives before me.

Me?

I extend all ways:
I fit into the walls and they pull me.

Light?

Light! I know it is light.

Stillness, and then,
something moves:
green, oh green, dazzling lightning!
And joy! this is my room;
there are my books, there the piano,
there the last bar I wrote,
there the last line,
and oh the sunlight!

A parrot screeches.

ACCIDENT

DEAR one!
you sit there
in the corner of the carriage;
and you do not know me;
and your eyes forbid.

Is it the dirt, the squalor,
the wear of human bodies,
and the dead faces of our neighbours?
These are but symbols.

You are proud; I praise you;
your mouth is set; you see beyond us;
and you see nothing.

I have the vision of your calm, cold face,
and of the black hair that waves above it;
I watch you; I love you;
I desire you.

There is a quiet here
within the thud-thud of the wheels
upon the railway.

F. S. FLINT

There is a quiet here
within my heart,
but tense and tender . . .

This is my station . . .

FRAGMENT

. . . THAT night I loved you
in the candlelight.
Your golden hair
strewed the sweet whiteness of the pillows
and the counterpane.
O the darkness of the corners,
the warm air, and the stars
framed in the casement of the ships' lights!
The waves lapped into the harbour;
the boats creaked;
a man's voice sang out on the quay;
and you loved me.
In your love were the tall tree fuchsias,
the blue of the hortensias, the scarlet nasturtiums,
the trees on the hills,
the roads we had covered,
and the sea that had borne your body
before the rocks of Hartland.
You loved me with these
and with the kindness of people,
country folk, sailors and fishermen,
and the old lady who had lodged us and supped us.

F. S. FLINT

You loved me with yourself
that was these and more,
changed as the earth is changed
into the bloom of flowers.

HOUSES

EVENING and quiet:
a bird trills in the poplar trees
behind the house with the dark green door
across the road.

Into the sky,
the red earthenware and the galvanised iron chimneys
thrust their cowls.
The hoot of the steamers on the Thames is plain.

No wind;
the trees merge, green with green;
a car whirs by;
footsteps and voices take their pitch
in the key of dusk,
far-off and near, subdued.

Solid and square to the world
the houses stand,
their windows blocked with venetian blinds.

Nothing will move them.

EAU-FORTE

On black bare trees a stale cream moon
hangs dead, and sours the unborn buds.

Two gaunt old hacks, knees bent, heads low,
tug, tired and spent, an old horse tram.

Damp smoke, rank mist fill the dark square;
and round the bend six bullocks come.

A hobbling, dirt-grimed drover guides
their clattering feet to death and shame.

D. H. LAWRENCE

D. H. LAWRENCE

BALLAD OF ANOTHER OPHELIA

Oh, the green glimmer of apples in the orchard,
Lamps in a wash of rain,
Oh, the wet walk of my brown hen through the stackyard,
Oh, tears on the window pane!

Nothing now will ripen the bright green apples,
Full of disappointment and of rain,
Brackish they will taste, of tears, when the yellow dapples
Of Autumn tell the withered tale again.

All round the yard it is cluck, my brown hen,
Cluck, and the rain-wet wings,
Cluck, my marigold bird, and again
Cluck for your yellow darlings.

For the grey rat found the gold thirteen
Huddled away in the dark,
Flutter for a moment, oh the beast is quick and keen,
Extinct one yellow-fluffy spark.

. . . . . .

Once I had a lover bright like running water,
Once his face was laughing like the sky;
Open like the sky looking down in all its laughter
On the buttercups — and buttercups was I.

What then is there hidden in the skirts of all the blossom,
What is peeping from your wings, oh mother hen?
'T is the sun who asks the question, in a lovely haste for wisdom —
What a lovely haste for wisdom is in men?

Yea, but it is cruel when undressed is all the blossom,
And her shift is lying white upon the floor,
That a grey one, like a shadow, like a rat, a thief, a rain-storm
Creeps upon her then and gathers in his store.

Oh, the grey garner that is full of half-grown apples,
Oh, the golden sparkles laid extinct — !
And oh, behind the cloud sheaves, like yellow autumn dapples,
Did you see the wicked sun that winked?

ILLICIT

In front of the sombre mountains, a faint, lost ribbon of
rainbow,
And between us and it, the thunder;
And down below, in the green wheat, the labourers
Stand like dark stumps, still in the green wheat.

You are near to me, and your naked feet in their sandals,
And through the scent of the balcony's naked timber
I distinguish the scent of your hair; so now the limber
Lightning falls from heaven.

Adown the pale-green, glacier-river floats
A dark boat through the gloom — and whither?
The thunder roars. But still we have each other.
The naked lightnings in the heaven dither
And disappear. What have we but each other?
The boat has gone.

FIREFLIES IN THE CORN

A Woman taunts her Lover

Look at the little darlings in the corn!
The rye is taller than you, who think yourself
So high and mighty: look how its heads are borne
Dark and proud in the sky, like a number of knights
Passing with spears and pennants and manly scorn.

And always likely! — Oh, if I could ride
With my head held high-serene against the sky
Do you think I 'd have a creature like you at my side
With your gloom and your doubt that you love me?
O darling rye,
How I adore you for your simple pride!

And those bright fireflies wafting in between
And over the swaying cornstalks, just above
All their dark-feathered helmets, like little green
Stars come low and wandering here for love
Of this dark earth, and wandering all serene — !

How I adore you, you happy things, you dears
Riding the air and carrying all the time
Your little lanterns behind you: it cheers

My heart to see you settling and trying to climb
The cornstalks, tipping with fire their spears.

All over the corn's dim motion, against the blue
Dark sky of night, the wandering glitter, the swarm
Of questing brilliant things: — you joy, you true
Spirit of careless joy: ah, how I warm
My poor and perished soul at the joy of you!

The Man answers and she mocks

You 're a fool, woman. I love you and you know I do!
— Lord, take his love away, it makes him whine.
And I give you everything that you want me to.
— Lord, dear Lord, do you think he ever *can* shine?

A WOMAN AND HER DEAD HUSBAND

Ah, stern cold man,
How can you lie so relentless hard
While I wash you with weeping water!
Ah, face, carved hard and cold,
You have been like this, on your guard
Against me, since death began.

You masquerader!
How can you shame to act this part
Of unswerving indifference to me?
It is not you; why disguise yourself
Against me, to break my heart,
You evader?

You've a warm mouth,
A good warm mouth always sooner to soften
Even than your sudden eyes.
Ah cruel, to keep your mouth
Relentless, however often
I kiss it in drouth.

You are not he.
Who are you, lying in his place on the bed

And rigid and indifferent to me?
His mouth, though he laughed or sulked
Was always warm and red
And good to me.

And his eyes could see
The white moon hang like a breast revealed
By the slipping shawl of stars,
Could see the small stars tremble
As the heart beneath did wield
Systole, diastole.

And he showed it me
So, when he made his love to me;
And his brows like rocks on the sea jut out,
And his eyes were deep like the sea
With shadow, and he looked at me,
Till I sank in him like the sea,
Awfully.

Oh, he was multiform —
Which then was he among the manifold?
The gay, the sorrowful, the seer?
I have loved a rich race of men in one —
— But not this, this never-warm
Metal-cold — !

Ah, masquerader!
With your steel face white-enamelled
Were you he, after all, and I never
Saw you or felt you in kissing?
— Yet sometimes my heart was trammelled
With fear, evader!

You will not stir,
Nor hear me, not a sound.
— Then it was you —
And all this time you were
Like this when I lived with you.
It is not true,
I am frightened, I am frightened of you
And of everything.
O God! — God too
Has deceived me in everything,
In everything.

THE MOWERS

THERE 's four men mowing down by the river;
I can hear the sound of the scythe strokes, four
Sharp breaths swishing: — yea, but I
Am sorry for what 's i' store.

The first man out o' the four that 's mowin'
Is mine: I mun claim him once for all:
— But I 'm sorry for him, on his young feet, knowin'
None o' the trouble he 's led to stall.

As he sees me bringin' the dinner, he lifts
His head as proud as a deer that looks
Shoulder-deep out o' th' corn: and wipes
His scythe blade bright, unhooks

His scythe stone, an' over the grass to me!
— Lad, tha 's gotten a chilt in me,
An' a man an' a father tha 'lt ha'e to be,
My young slim lad, an' I 'm sorry for thee.

SCENT OF IRISES

A FAINT, sickening scent of irises
Persists all morning. Here in a jar on the table
A fine proud spike of purple irises
Rising above the class-room litter, makes me unable
To see the class's lifted and bended faces
Save in a broken pattern, amid purple and gold and sable.

I can smell the gorgeous bog-end, in its breathless
Dazzle of may-blobs, when the marigold glare overcast
You with fire on your brow and your cheeks and your chin
as you dipped
Your face in your marigold bunch, to touch and contrast
Your own dark mouth with the bridal faint lady-smocks
Dissolved in the golden sorcery you should not outlast.

You amid the bog-end's yellow incantation,
You sitting in the cowslips of the meadows above,
— Me, your shadow on the bog-flame, flowery may-blobs,
Me full length in the cowslips, muttering you love —
You, your soul like a lady-smock, lost, evanescent,
You, with your face all rich, like the sheen on a dove — !

You are always asking, do I remember, remember
The buttercup bog-end where the flowers rose up
And kindled you over deep with a coat of gold?
You ask again, do the healing days close up
The open darkness which then drew us in,
The dark that swallows all, and nought throws up.

You upon the dry, dead beech-leaves, in the fire of night
Burnt like a sacrifice; — you invisible —
Only the fire of darkness, and the scent of you!
— And yes, thank God, it still is possible
The healing days shall close the darkness up
Wherein I breathed you like a smoke or dew.

Like vapour, dew, or poison. Now, thank God,
The golden fire has gone, and your face is ash
Indistinguishable in the grey, chill day,
The night has burnt you out, at last the good
Dark fire burns on untroubled without clash
Of you upon the dead leaves saying me yea.

GREEN

THE sky was apple-green,
The sky was green wine held up in the sun,
The moon was a golden petal between.

She opened her eyes, and green
They shone, clear like flowers undone,
For the first time, now for the first time seen.

AMY LOWELL

AMY LOWELL

VENUS TRANSIENS

TELL me,
Was Venus more beautiful
Than you are,
When she topped
The crinkled waves,
Drifting shoreward
On her plaited shell?
Was Botticelli's vision
Fairer than mine;
And were the painted rosebuds
He tossed his lady,
Of better worth
Than the words I blow about you
To cover your too great loveliness
As with a gauze
Of misted silver?

For me,
You stand poised
In the blue and buoyant air,

Cinctured by bright winds,
Treading the sunlight.
And the waves which precede you
Ripple and stir
The sands at my feet.

THE TRAVELLING BEAR

GRASS-BLADES push up between the cobblestones
And catch the sun on their flat sides
Shooting it back,
Gold and emerald,
Into the eyes of passers-by.

And over the cobblestones,
Square-footed and heavy,
Dances the trained bear.
The cobbles cut his feet,
And he has a ring in his nose
Which hurts him;
But still he dances,
For the keeper pricks him with a sharp stick,
Under his fur.

Now the crowd gapes and chuckles,
And boys and young women shuffle their feet in time to
the dancing bear.
They see him wobbling
Against a dust of emerald and gold,
And they are greatly delighted.

The legs of the bear shake with fatigue
And his back aches,
And the shining grass-blades dazzle and confuse him.
But still he dances,
Because of the little, pointed stick.

THE LETTER

LITTLE cramped words scrawling all over the paper
Like draggled fly's legs,
What can you tell of the flaring moon
Through the oak leaves?
Or of my uncurtained window and the bare floor
Spattered with moonlight?
Your silly quirks and twists have nothing in them
Of blossoming hawthorns,
And this paper is dull, crisp, smooth, virgin of loveliness
Beneath my hand.

I am tired, Beloved, of chafing my heart against
The want of you;
Of squeezing it into little inkdrops,
And posting it.
And I scald alone, here, under the fire
Of the great moon.

GROTESQUE

WHY do the lilies goggle their tongues at me
When I pluck them;
And writhe, and twist,
And strangle themselves against my fingers,
So that I can hardly weave the garland
For your hair?
Why do they shriek your name
And spit at me
When I would cluster them?
Must I kill them
To make them lie still,
And send you a wreath of lolling corpses
To turn putrid and soft
On your forehead
While you dance?

BULLION

My thoughts
Chink against my ribs
And roll about like silver hail-stones.
I should like to spill them out,
And pour them, all shining,
Over you.
But my heart is shut upon them
And holds them straitly.

Come, You! and open my heart;
That my thoughts torment me no longer,
But glitter in your hair.

SOLITAIRE

When night drifts along the streets of the city,
And sifts down between the uneven roofs,
My mind begins to peek and peer.
It plays at ball in old, blue Chinese gardens,
And shakes wrought dice-cups in Pagan temples,
Amid the broken flutings of white pillars.
It dances with purple and yellow crocuses in its hair,
And its feet shine as they flutter over drenched grasses.
How light and laughing my mind is,
When all the good folk have put out their bed-room candles,
And the city is still!

THE BOMBARDMENT

SLOWLY, without force, the rain drops into the city. It stops a moment on the carved head of Saint John, then slides on again, slipping and trickling over his stone cloak. It splashes from the lead conduit of a gargoyle, and falls from it in turmoil on the stones in the Cathedral square. Where are the people, and why does the fretted steeple sweep about in the sky? Boom! The sound swings against the rain. Boom, again! After it, only water rushing in the gutters, and the turmoil from the spout of the gargoyle. Silence. Ripples and mutters. Boom!

The room is damp, but warm. Little flashes swarm about from the firelight. The lustres of the chandelier are bright, and clusters of rubies leap in the bohemian glasses on the *étagère*. Her hands are restless, but the white masses of her hair are quite still. Boom! Will it never cease to torture, this iteration! Boom! The vibration shatters a glass on the *étagère*. It lies there formless and glowing, with all its crimson gleams shot out of pattern, spilled, flowing red, blood-red. A thin bell-note pricks through the silence. A door creaks. The old lady speaks: "Victor, clear away that broken glass." "Alas! Madame, the bohemian glass!" "Yes, Victor, one hundred years ago my father brought it —" Boom! The

room shakes, the servitor quakes. Another goblet shivers and breaks. Boom!

It rustles at the window-pane, the smooth, streaming rain, and he is shut within its clash and murmur. Inside is his candle, his table, his ink, his pen, and his dreams. He is thinking, and the walls are pierced with beams of sunshine, slipping through young green. A fountain tosses itself up at the blue sky, and through the spattered water in the basin he can see copper carp, lazily floating among cold leaves. A wind-harp in a cedar-tree grieves and whispers, and words blow into his brain, bubbled, iridescent, shooting up like flowers of fire, higher and higher. Boom! The flame-flowers snap on their slender stems. The fountain rears up in long broken spears of disheveled water and flattens into the earth. Boom! And there is only the room, the table, the candle, and the sliding rain. Again, Boom! — Boom! — Boom! He stuffs his fingers into his ears. He sees corpses, and cries out in fright. Boom! It is night, and they are shelling the city! Boom! Boom!

A child wakes and is afraid, and weeps in the darkness. What has made the bed shake? "Mother, where are you? I am awake." "Hush, my Darling, I am here." "But, Mother, something so queer happened, the room shook." Boom! "Oh! What is it? What is the matter?" Boom!

"Where is Father? I am so afraid." Boom! The child sobs and shrieks. The house trembles and creaks. Boom!

Retorts, globes, tubes, and phials lie shattered. All his trials oozing across the floor. The life that was his choosing, lonely, urgent, goaded by a hope, all gone. A weary man in a ruined laboratory, that was his story. Boom! Gloom and ignorance, and the jig of drunken brutes. Diseases like snakes crawling over the earth, leaving trails of slime. Wails from people burying their dead. Through the window he can see the rocking steeple. A ball of fire falls on the lead of the roof, and the sky tears apart on a spike of flame. Up the spire, behind the lacings of stone, zig-zagging in and out of the carved tracings, squirms the fire. It spouts like yellow wheat from the gargoyles, coils round the head of Saint John, and aureoles him in light. It leaps into the night and hisses against the rain. The Cathedral is a burning stain on the white, wet night.

Boom! The Cathedral is a torch, and the houses next to it begin to scorch. Boom! The bohemian glass on the *étagère* is no longer there. Boom! A stalk of flame sways against the red damask curtains. The old lady cannot walk. She watches the creeping stalk and counts. Boom! — Boom! — Boom!

The poet rushes into the street, and the rain wraps him in a sheet of silver. But it is threaded with gold and powdered with scarlet beads. The city burns. Quivering, spearing, thrusting, lapping, streaming, run the flames. Over roofs, and walls, and shops, and stalls. Smearing its gold on the sky the fire dances, lances itself through the doors, and lisps and chuckles along the floors.

The child wakes again and screams at the yellow petalled flower flickering at the window. The little red lips of flame creep along the ceiling beams.

The old man sits among his broken experiments and looks at the burning Cathedral. Now the streets are swarming with people. They seek shelter and crowd into the cellars. They shout and call, and over all, slowly and without force, the rain drops into the city. Boom! And the steeple crashes down among the people. Boom! Boom, again! The water rushes along the gutters. The fire roars and mutters. Boom!

THE END

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SOME IMAGIST POETS, 1916

SOME IMAGIST POETS
1916

AN ANNUAL ANTHOLOGY

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PREFACE

In bringing the second volume of *Some Imagist Poets* before the public, the authors wish to express their gratitude for the interest which the 1915 volume aroused. The discussion of it was widespread, and even those critics out of sympathy with Imagist tenets accorded it much space. In the Preface to that book, we endeavoured to present those tenets in a succinct form. But the very brevity we employed has lead to a great deal of misunderstanding. We have decided, therefore, to explain the laws which govern us a little more fully. A few people may understand, and the rest can merely misunderstand again, a result to which we are quite accustomed.

In the first place "Imagism" does not mean merely the presentation of pictures. "Imagism" refers to the manner of presentation, not to the subject. It means a clear presentation of whatever the author wishes to convey. Now he may wish to convey a mood of indecision, in which case the poem should be indecisive; he may wish to bring before his reader the constantly shifting and changing lights over a landscape, or the varying attitudes of mind of a person under

strong emotion, then his poem must shift and change to present this clearly. The "exact" word does not mean the word which exactly describes the object in itself, it means the "exact" word which brings the effect of that object before the reader as it presented itself to the poet's mind at the time of writing the poem. Imagists deal but little with similes, although much of their poetry is metaphorical. The reason for this is that while acknowledging the figure to be an integral part of all poetry, they feel that the constant imposing of one figure upon another in the same poem blurs the central effect.

The great French critic, Remy de Gourmont, wrote last Summer in *La France* that the Imagists were the descendants of the French *Symbolistes*. In the Preface to his *Livre des Masques*, M. de Gourmont has thus described *Symbolisme*: "Individualism in literature, liberty of art, abandonment of existing forms . . . The sole excuse which a man can have for writing is to write down himself, to unveil for others the sort of world which mirrors itself in his individual glass . . . He should create his own aesthetics—and we should admit as many aesthetics as there are original minds, and judge them for what they are and not what they are not." In this sense the Imagists are descendants of the *Symbolistes*; they are Individualists.

PREFACE

The only reason that Imagism has seemed so anarchaic and strange to English and American reviewers is that their minds do not easily and quickly suggest the steps by which modern art has arrived at its present position. Its immediate prototype cannot be found in English or American literature, we must turn to Europe for it. With Debussy and Stravinsky in music, and Gauguin and Matisse in painting, it should have been evident to every one that art was entering upon an era of change. But music and painting are universal languages, so we have become accustomed to new idioms in them, while we still find it hard to recognize a changed idiom in literature.

The crux of the situation is just here. It is in the idiom employed. Imagism asks to be judged by different standards from those employed in Nineteenth-Century art. It is small wonder that Imagist poetry should be incomprehensible to men whose sole touchstone for art is the literature of one country for a period of four centuries. And it is an illuminating fact that among poets and men conversant with many poetic idioms, Imagism is rarely misconceived. They may not agree with us, but they do not misunderstand us.

This must not be misconstrued into the desire to belittle our forerunners. On the contrary, the Imagists have the greatest admiration for the past, and humility towards it. But they

have been caught in the throes of a new birth. The exterior world is changing, and with it men's feelings, and every age must express its feelings in its own individual way. No art is any more "egoistic" than another; all art is an attempt to express the feelings of the artist, whether it be couched in narrative form or employ a more personal expression.

It is not what Imagists write about which makes them hard of comprehension; it is the way they write it. All nations have laws of prosody, which undergo changes from time to time. The laws of English metrical prosody are well known to every one concerned with the subject. But that is only one from of prosody. Other nations have had different ones: Anglo-Saxon poetry was founded upon alliteration, Greek and Roman was built upon quantity, the Oriental was formed out of repetition, and the Japanese Hokku got its effects by an exact and never-to-be-added-to series of single syllables. So it is evident that poetry can be written in many modes. That the Imagists base much of their poetry upon cadence and not upon metre makes them neither good nor bad. And no one realizes more than they that no theories nor rules make poetry. They claim for their work only that it is sincere.

It is this very fact of "cadence" which has misled so many reviewers, until some have been betrayed into saying that

the Imagists discard rhythm, when rhythm is the most important quality in their technique. The definition of *vers libre* is — a verse-form based upon cadence. Now cadence in music is one thing, cadence in poetry quite another, since we are not dealing with tone but with rhythm. It is the sense of perfect balance of flow and rhythm. Not only must the syllables so fall as to increase and continue the movement, but the whole poem must be as rounded and recurring as the circular swing of a balanced pendulum. It can be fast or slow, it may even jerk, but this perfect swing it must have, even its jerks must follow the central movement. To illustrate: Suppose a person were given the task of walking, or running, round a large circle, with two minutes given to do it in. Two minutes which he would just consume if he walked round the circle quietly. But in order to make the task easier for him, or harder, as the case might be, he was required to complete each half of the circle in exactly a minute. No other restrictions were placed upon him. He might dawdle in the beginning, and run madly to reach the half-circle mark on time, and then complete his task by walking steadily round the second half to goal. Or he might leap, and run, and skip, and linger in all sorts of ways, making up for slow going by fast, and for extra haste by pauses, and varying these movements on either lap of the circle as the humour seized

him, only so that he were just one minute in traversing the first half-circle, and just one minute in traversing the second. Another illustration which may be employed is that of a Japanese wood-carving where a toad in one corner is balanced by a spray of blown flowers in the opposite upper one. The flowers are not the same shape as the toad, neither are they the same size, but the balance is preserved.

The unit in *vers libre* is not the foot, the number of the syllables, the quantity, or the line. The unit is the strophe which may be the whole poem, or may be only a part. Each strophe is a complete circle: in fact, the meaning of the Greek word "strophe" is simply that part of the poem which was recited while the chorus were making a turn round the altar set up in the centre of the theatre. The simile of the circle is more than a simile, therefore ; it is a fact. Of course the circle need not always be the same size, nor need the times allowed to negotiate it be always the same. There is room here for an infinite number of variations. Also, circles can be added to circles, movement upon movement, to the poem, provided each movement completes itself, and ramifies naturally into the next. But one thing must be borne in mind: a cadenced poem is written to be read aloud, in this way only will its rhythm be felt. Poetry is a spoken and not a written art.

The *vers libristes* are often accused of declaring that they have discovered a new thing. Where such an idea started, it is impossible to say, certainly none of the better *vers libristes* was ever guilty of so ridiculous a statement. The name *vers libre* is new, the thing, most emphatically, is not. Not new in English poetry, at any rate. You will find something very much like it in Dryden's *Threnodia Augustalis*; a great deal of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is written in it; and Matthew Arnold's *Philomela* is a shining example of it. Practically all of Henley's *London Voluntaries* are written in it, and (so potent are names) until it was christened *vers libre*, no one thought of objecting to it. But the oldest reference to *vers libre* is to be found in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, where the Eagle addresses the Poet in these words:

> And nevertheless hast set thy wyt
> Although that in thy heed full lyte is
> To make bookes, songes, or dytees
> In rhyme or elles in cadence.

Commentators have wasted reams of paper in an endeavour to determine what Chaucer meant by this. But is it not possible that he meant a verse based upon rhythm, but which did not follow the strict metrical prosody of his usual practice?

One of the charges frequently brought against the Ima-

gists is that they write, not poetry, but "shredded prose." This misconception springs from the almost complete ignorance of the public in regard to the laws of cadenced verse. But, in fact, what is prose and what is poetry? Is it merely a matter of typographical arrangement? Must everything which is printed in equal lines, with rhymes at the ends, be called poetry, and everything which is printed in a block be called prose? Aristotle, who certainly knew more about this subject than any one else, declares in his *Rhetoric* that prose is rhythmical without being metrical (that is to say, without insistence on any single rhythm), and then goes on to state the feet that are employed in prose, making, incidentally, the remark that the iambic prevailed in ordinary conversation. The fact is, that there is no hard and fast dividing line between prose and poetry. As a French poet of distinction, Paul Fort, has said: "Prose and poetry are but one instrument, graduated." It is not a question of typography; it is not even a question of rules and forms. Poetry is the vision in a man's soul which he translates as best he can with the means at his disposal.

We are young, we are experimentalists, but we ask to be judged by our own standards, not by those which have governed other men at other times.

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RICHARD ALDINGTON

RICHARD ALDINGTON

EROS AND PSYCHE

In an old dull yard near Camden Town,
Which echoes with the rattle of cars and 'busses
And freight-trains, puffing steam and smoke and dirt
To the steaming, sooty sky —
There stands an old and grimy statue,
A statue of Psyche and her lover, Eros.

A little nearer Camden Town,
In a square of ugly sordid shops,
Is another statue, facing the Tube,
Staring with a heavy, purposeless glare
At the red and white shining tiles —
A tall stone statue of Cobden.
And though no one ever pauses to see
What hero it is that faces the Tube,
I can understand very well indeed
That England must honour its national heroes,
Must honour the hero of Free Trade —
Or was it the Corn Laws? —
That I can understand.

But what I shall never understand
Is the little group in the dingy yard
Under the dingier sky,
The Eros and Psyche —
Surrounded with pots and terra-cotta busts
And urns and broken pillars —
Eros, naked, with his wings stretched out
Just lighting down to kiss her on the lips.

What are they doing here in Camden Town
In the midst of all this clamour and filth?
They who should stand in a sun-lit room
Hung with deep purple, painted with gods,
Paved with white porphyry,
Stand for ever embraced
By the side of a rustling fountain
Over a marble basin
Carved with leopards and grapes and young men dancing;
Or in a garden leaning above Corinth,
Under the ilices and the cypresses,
Very white against a very blue sky;
Or growing hoary, if they must grow old,
With lichens and softly creeping moss.
What are they doing here in Camden Town?
And who has brought their naked beauty

And their young fresh lust to Camden Town,
Which settled long ago to toil and sweat and filth,
Forgetting—to the greater glory of Free Trade—
Young beauty and young love and youthful flesh?

Slowly the rain settles down on them,
Slowly the soot eats into them,
Slowly the stone grows greyer and dirtier,
Till in spite of his spreading wings
Her eyes have a rim of soot
Half an inch deep,
And his wings, the tall god's wings,
That should be red and silver
Are ocherous brown.

And I peer from a 'bus-top
As we splash through the grease and puddles,
And I glimpse them, huddled against the wall,
Half-hidden under a freight-train's smoke,
And I see the limbs that a Greek slave cut
In some old Italian town,
I see them growing older
And sadder
And greyer.

AFTER TWO YEARS

She is all so slight
And tender and white
As a May morning.
She walks without hood
At dusk. It is good
To hear her sing.

It is God's will
That I shall love her still
As He loves Mary.
And night and day
I will go forth to pray
That she love me.

She is as gold
Lovely, and far more cold.
Do thou pray with me,
For if I win grace
To kiss twice her face
God has done well to me.

1915

THE limbs of gods,
Still, veined marble,
Rest heavily in sleep
Under a saffron twilight.

Not for them battle,
Severed limbs, death, and a cry of victory;
Not for them strife
And a torment of storm.

A vast breast moves slowly,
The great thighs shift,
The stone eyelids rise;
The slow tongue speaks:

"*Only a rain of bright dust;*
In the outer air;
A little whisper of wind;
Sleep; rest; forget."

Bright dust of battle!
A little whisper of dead souls!

WHITECHAPEL

NOISE;
Iron hoofs, iron wheels, iron din
Of drays and trams and feet passing;
Iron
Beaten to a vast mad cacophony.

In vain the shrill, far cry
Of swallows sweeping by;
In vain the silence and green
Of meadows Apriline;
In vain the clear white rain —

Soot; mud;
A nation maddened with labour;
Interminable collision of energies —
Iron beating upon iron;
Smoke whirling upwards,
Speechless, impotent.

In vain the shrill, far cry
Of kittiwakes that fly
Where the sea waves leap green.
The meadows Apriline —

Noise, iron, smoke;
Iron, iron, iron.

SUNSETS

THE white body of the evening
Is torn into scarlet,
Slashed and gouged and seared
Into crimson,
And hung ironically
With garlands of mist.

And the wind
Blowing over London from Flanders
Has a bitter taste.

PEOPLE

Why should you try to crush me?
Am I so Christ-like?

You beat against me,
Immense waves, filthy with refuse.
I am the last upright of a smashed break-water,
But you shall not crush me
Though you bury me in foaming slime
And hiss your hatred about me.

You break over me, cover me;
I shudder at the contact;
Yet I pierce through you
And stand up, torn, dripping, shaken,
But whole and fierce.

REFLECTIONS

I

STEAL out with me
Over the moss and the daffodils.

Come to the temple,
Hung with sprays from untrimmed hedges.

I bring you a token
From the golden-haired revellers,
From the mad procession.

Come,
Flute girls shall pipe to us —
Their beautiful fingers! —
They are yellow-throated birds.
They send perfumes from dawn-scented garments,
Bending above us.

Come,
Bind your hair with white poplar,
Let your lips be sweet,
Wild roses of Paestum.

II

Ghost moths hover over asphodel;
Shades, once Laïs' peers
Drift past us;
The mist is grey.

Far over us
The white wave-crests flash in the sun;
The sea-girls lie upon hot, weedy rocks.

Now the Maid returns to us
With fragrance of the world
And of the hours of gods.
On earth
Apple-trees, weighted with red fruit,
Streams, passing through the corn lands,
Hear laughter.

We pluck the asphodel,
Yet we weave no crowns
For we have no vines;
No one speaks here;
No one kisses.

H. D.

H. D.

SEA GODS

I

THEY say there is no hope —
Sand — drift — rocks — rubble of the sea —
The broken hulk of a ship,
Hung with shreds of rope,
Pallid under the cracked pitch.

They say there is no hope
To conjure you —
No whip of the tongue to anger you —
No hate of words
You must rise to refute.

They say you are twisted by the sea,
You are cut apart
By wave-break upon wave-break,
That you are misshapen by the sharp rocks,
Broken by the rasp and after-rasp.

That you are cut, torn, mangled,
Torn by the stress and beat,
No stronger than the strips of sand
Along your ragged beach.

II

But we bring violets,
Great masses — single, sweet,
Wood-violets, stream-violets,
Violets from a wet marsh.

Violets in clumps from hills,
Tufts with earth at the roots,
Violets tugged from rocks,
Blue violets, moss, cliff, river-violets.

Yellow violets' gold,
Burnt with a rare tint —
Violets like red ash
Among tufts of grass.

We bring deep-purple
Bird-foot violets.

We bring the hyacinth-violet,
Sweet, bare, chill to the touch—
And violets whiter than the in-rush
Of your own white surf.

III

For you will come,
You will yet haunt men in ships,
You will trail across the fringe of strait
And circle the jagged rocks.

You will trail across the rocks
And wash them with your salt,
You will curl between sand-hills—
You will thunder along the cliff—
Break—retreat—get fresh strength—
Gather and pour weight upon the beach.

You will draw back,
And the ripple on the sand-shelf
Will be witness of your track.

O privet-white, you will paint
The lintel of wet sand with froth.

You will bring myrrh-bark
And drift laurel-wood from hot coasts.
When you hurl high — high —
We will answer with a shout.

For you will come,
You will come,
You will answer our taut hearts,
You will break the lie of men's thoughts,
And cherish and shelter us.

THE SHRINE

("*She Watches Over the Sea*")

I

ARE your rocks shelter for ships?
Have you sent galleys from your beach —
Are you graded — a safe crescent,
Where the tide lifts them back to port?
Are you full and sweet,
Tempting the quiet
To depart in their trading ships?

Nay, you are great, fierce, evil —
You are the land-blight —
You have tempted men,
But they perished on your cliffs.

Your lights are but dank shoals,
Slate and pebbles and wet shells
And sea-weed fastened to the rocks.

It was evil — evil
When they found you —
When the quiet men looked at you.

They sought a headland,
Shaded with ledge of cliff
From the wind-blast.

But you — you are unsheltered —
Cut with the weight of wind.
You shudder when it strikes,
Then lift, swelled with the blast.
You sink as the tide sinks.
You shrill under the hail, and sound
Thunder when thunder sounds.

You are useless.
When the tides swirl,
Your boulders cut and wreck
The staggering ships.

II

You are useless,
O grave, O beautiful.
The landsmen tell it — I have heard
You are useless.

And the wind sounds with this
And the sea,

Where rollers shot with blue
Cut under deeper blue.

O but stay tender, enchanted,
Where wave-lengths cut you
Apart from all the rest.
For we have found you.
We watch the splendour of you.
We thread throat on throat of freesia
For your shelf.

You are not forgot,
O plunder of lilies—
Honey is not more sweet
Than the salt stretch of your beach.

III

Stay—stay—
But terror has caught us now.
We passed the men in ships.
We dared deeper than the fisher-folk,
And you strike us with terror,
O bright shaft.

Flame passes under us,
And sparks that unknot the flesh,

Sorrow, splitting bone from bone —
Splendour athwart our eyes,
And rifts in the splendour —
Sparks and scattered light.

Many warned of this.
Men said:
There are wrecks on the fore-beach.
Wind will beat your ship.
There is no shelter in that headland.
It is useless waste, that edge,
That front of rock.
Sea-gulls clang beyond the breakers —
None venture to that spot.

IV

But hail —
As the tide slackens,
As the wind beats out,
We hail this shore.
We sing to you,
Spirit between the headlands
And the further rocks.

Though oak-beams split,
Though boats and sea-men flounder,

And the strait grind sand with sand
And cut boulders to sand and drift —

Your eyes have pardoned our faults.
Your hands have touched us.
You have leaned forward a little
And the waves can never thrust us back
From the splendour of your ragged coast.

TEMPLE — THE CLIFF

I

GREAT, bright portal,
Shelf of rock,
Rocks fitted in long ledges,
Rocks fitted to dark, to silver-granite,
To lighter rock —
Clean cut, white against white.

High — high — and no hill-goat
Tramples — no mountain-sheep
Has set foot on your fine grass.
You lift, you are the world-edge,
Pillar for the sky-arch.

The world heaved —
We are next to the sky.
Over us, sea-hawks shout,
Gulls sweep past.
The terrible breakers are silent
From this place.

Below us, on the rock-edge,
Where earth is caught in the fissures

Of the jagged cliff,
A small tree stiffens in the gale,
It bends — but its white flowers
Are fragrant at this height.

And under and under,
The wind booms.
It whistles, it thunders,
It growls — it presses the grass
Beneath its great feet.

II

I said:
Forever and forever must I follow you
Through the stones?
I catch at you — you lurch.
You are quicker than my hand-grasp.

I wondered at you.
I shouted — dear — mysterious — beautiful —
White myrtle-flesh.

I was splintered and torn.
The hill-path mounted
Swifter than my feet.

Could a dæmon avenge this hurt,
I would cry to him — could a ghost,
I would shout — O evil,
Follow this god,
Taunt him with his evil and his vice.

III

Shall I hurl myself from here,
Shall I leap and be nearer you?
Shall I drop, beloved, beloved,
Ankle against ankle?
Would you pity me, O white breast?

If I woke, would you pity me,
Would our eyes meet?

Have you heard,
Do you know how I climbed this rock?
My breath caught, I lurched forward —
I stumbled in the ground-myrtle.

Have you heard, O god seated on the cliff,
How far toward the ledges of your house,
How far I had to walk?

IV

Over me the wind swirls.
I have stood on your portal
And I know —
You are further than this,
Still further on another cliff.

MID-DAY

THE light beats upon me.
I am startled —
A split leaf crackles on the paved floor —
I am anguished — defeated.

A slight wind shakes the seed-pods.
My thoughts are spent
As the black seeds.
My thoughts tear me.
I dread their fever —
I am scattered in its whirl.
I am scattered like
The hot shrivelled seeds.

The shrivelled seeds
Are spilt on the path.
The grass bends with dust.
The grape slips
Under its crackled leaf:
Yet far beyond the spent seed-pods,
And the blackened stalks of mint,
The poplar is bright on the hill,

H. D.

The poplar spreads out,
Deep-rooted among trees.

O poplar, you are great
Among the hill-stones,
While I perish on the path
Among the crevices of the rocks.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

ARIZONA

THE WINDMILLS

THE windmills, like great sunflowers of steel,
Lift themselves proudly over the straggling houses;
And at their feet the deep blue-green alfalfa
Cuts the desert like the stroke of a sword.

Yellow melon flowers
Crawl beneath the withered peach-trees;
A date-palm throws its heavy fronds of steel
Against the scoured metallic sky.

The houses, doubled-roofed for coolness,
Cower amid the manzanita scrub.
A man with jingling spurs
Walks heavily out of a vine-bowered doorway,
Mounts his pony, rides away.

The windmills stare at the sun.
The yellow earth cracks and blisters.
Everything is still.

In the afternoon
The wind takes dry waves of heat and tosses them,
Mingled with dust, up and down the streets,
Against the belfry with its green bells:

And, after sunset, when the sky
Becomes a green and orange fan,
The windmills, like great sunflowers on dried stalks,
Stare hard at the sun they cannot follow.

Turning, turning, forever turning
In the chill night-wind that sweeps over the valley,
With the shriek and the clank of the pumps groaning
beneath them,
And the choking gurgle of tepid water.

MEXICAN QUARTER

By an alley lined with tumble-down shacks
And street-lamps askew, half-sputtering,
Feebly glimmering on gutters choked with filth and dogs
Scratching their mangy backs:
Half-naked children are running about,
Women puff cigarettes in black doorways,
Crickets are crying.
Men slouch sullenly
Into the shadows:
Behind a hedge of cactus,
The smell of a dead horse
Mingles with the smell of tamales frying.

And a girl in a black lace shawl
Sits in a rickety chair by the square of an unglazed window,
And sees the explosion of the stars
Softly poised on a velvet sky.
And she is humming to herself:—
"Stars, if I could reach you,
(You are so very clear that it seems as if I could reach you)

I would give you all to Madonna's image,
On the grey-plastered altar behind the paper flowers,
So that Juan would come back to me,
And we could live again those lazy burning hours
Forgetting the tap of my fan and my sharp words.
And I would only keep four of you,
Those two blue-white ones overhead,
To hang in my ears;
And those two orange ones yonder,
To fasten on my shoe-buckles."

A little further along the street
A man sits stringing a brown guitar.
The smoke of his cigarette curls round his head,
And he, too, is humming, but other words:
"Think not that at your window I wait;
New love is better, the old is turned to hate.
Fate! Fate! All things pass away;
Life is forever, youth is for a day.
Love again if you may
Before the stars are blown out of the sky
And the crickets die;
Babylon and Samarkand
Are mud walls in a waste of sand."

RAIN IN THE DESERT

THE huge red-buttressed mesa over yonder
Is merely a far-off temple where the sleepy sun is burning
Its altar-fires of pinyon and of toyon for the day.

The old priests sleep, white-shrouded,
Their pottery whistles lie beside them, the prayer-sticks
closely feathered;
On every mummied face there glows a smile.

The sun is rolling slowly
Beneath the sluggish folds of the sky-serpents,
Coiling, uncoiling, blue-black, sparked with fires.

The old dead priests
Feel in the thin dried earth that is heaped about them,
Above the smell of scorching oozing pinyon,
The acrid smell of rain.

And now the showers
Surround the mesa like a troop of silver dancers:
Shaking their rattles, stamping, chanting, roaring,
Whirling, extinguishing the last red wisp of light.

CLOUDS ACROSS THE CANYON

SHADOWS of clouds
March across the canyon,
Shadows of blue hands passing
Over a curtain of flame.

Clutching, staggering, upstriking,
Darting in blue-black fury,
To where pinnacles, green and orange,
Await.

The winds are battling and striving to break them:
Thin lightnings spit and flicker,
The peaks seem a dance of scarlet demons
Flitting amid the shadows.

Grey rain-curtains wave afar off,
Wisps of vapour curl and vanish.
The sun throws soft shafts of golden light
Over rose-buttressed palisades.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

Now the clouds are a lazy procession;
Blue balloons bobbing solemnly
Over black-dappled walls,

Where rise sharp-fretted, golden-roofed cathedrals
Exultantly, and split the sky with light.

THE UNQUIET STREET

By day and night this street is not still:
Omnibuses with red tail-lamps,
Taxicabs with shiny eyes,
Rumble, shunning its ugliness.
It is corrugated with wheel-ruts,
It is dented and pockmarked with traffic,
It has no time for sleep.
It heaves its old scarred countenance
Skyward between the buildings
And never says a word.

On rainy nights
It dully gleams
Like the cold tarnished scales of a snake:
And over it hang arc-lamps,
Blue-white death-lilies on black stems.

IN THE THEATRE

Darkness in the theatre:
Darkness and a multitude
Assembled in the darkness.
These who every day perform
The unique tragi-comedy
Of birth and death;
Now press upon each other,
Directing the irresistible weight of their thoughts
to the stage.

A great broad shaft of calcium light
Cleaves, like a stroke of a sword, the darkness:
And, at the end of it,
A tiny spot which is the red nose of a comedian
Marks the goal of the spot-light and the eyes which
people the darkness.

SHIPS IN THE HARBOUR

LIKE a flock of great blue cranes
Resting upon the water,
The ships assemble at morning, when the grey light wakes
in the east.

Weary, no longer flying,
Over the hissing spindrift, through the ravelled clutching
sea ;
No longer over the tops of the waves spinning along north-
eastward,
In a great irregular wedge before the trade-wind far from
land.

But drowsy, mournful, silent,
Yet under their bulged projecting bows runs the silver foam
of the sunlight,
And rebelliously they shake out their plumage of sails, wet
and heavy with the rain.

THE EMPTY HOUSE

Out from my window-sill I lean,
And see a straight four-storied row
Of houses.

Once, long ago,
These had their glory: they were built
In the fair palmy days before
The Civil War when all the seas
Saw the white sails of Yankee ships
Scurrying home with spice and gold.
And many of these houses hung
Proud wisps of crêpe upon their doors
On hearing that some son had died
At Chancellorsville or Fredericksburg,
Their offering to the Union side.

But man's forever drifting will
Again took hold of him — again
The fashionable quarter shifted: soon,
Before some plastering had dried,
Society packed up, went away.
Now, could you see these houses,
You would not think they ever had a prime:

A grim four-storied serried row
Of rooms to let — at any time
Tenants are moving in or out.
Families drifting down or struggling still
To keep their heads up and not drown.
A tragic busy pettiness
Has settled on them all,
But one.
And in that one, when I came here,
A family lived, but with its trunks packed up,
And now that family's gone.

Its shutterless blindless windows let you look inside
And see the sunlight chequering the bare floor
With patterns from the window-frames
All day.
Its backyard neatly swept,
Contains no crammed ash-barrels and no lines
For clothes to flap about on;
It does not look by day as if it had
Ever a living soul beneath its roof.
It seems to mark a gap in the grim line,
No house at all, but an unfinished shell.

But when the windows up and down those faces
With yellow glimmer of gas, blaze forth;

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

I know it is the only house that lives
In all that grim four-storied row.
The others are mere shelves, overcrowded layers,
Of warring, separate personalities;
A jangle and a tangle of emotions,
Without a single meaning running through them;
But it, the empty house, has mastered all its secrets.
Behind its silent swarthy face,
Eyelessly proud,
It watches, it is master;
It sees the other houses still incessantly learning
The lesson it remembers,
And which it can repeat the last dim syllable of.

THE SKATERS

To A. D. R.

Black swallows swooping or gliding
In a flurry of entangled loops and curves;
The skaters skim over the frozen river.
And the grinding click of their skates as they impinge
upon the surface,
Is like the brushing together of thin wing-tips of
silver.

F. S. FLINT

F. S. FLINT

EASTER

FRIEND
we will take the path that leads
down from the flagstaff by the pond
through the gorse thickets;
see, the golden spikes have thrust their points through,
and last year's bracken lies yellow-brown and trampled.
The sapling birch-groves have shown no leaf,
and the wistarias on the desolate pergola
are shorn and ashen.
We lurch on, and, stumbling,
touch each other.
You do not shrink, friend.
There you, and I here,
side by side, we go, jesting.
We do not seek, we do not avoid, contact.

Here is the road,
with the budding elm-trees lining it,
and there the low gate in the wall;
on the other side, the people.

Are they not aliens?
You and I for a moment see them
shabby of limb and soul,
patched up to make shift.
We laugh and strengthen each other;
But the evil is done.

Is not the whole park made for them,
and the bushes and plants and trees and grasses,
have they not grown to their standard?
The paths are worn to the gravel with their feet;
the green moss will not carpet them.
The flags of the stone steps are hollowed;
and you and I must strive to remain two
and not to merge in the multitude.
It impinges on us; it separates us;
we shrink from it; we brave through it;
we laugh; we jest; we jeer;
and we save the fragments of our souls.

Between two clipped privet hedges now;
we will close our eyes for life's sake
to life's patches.
Here, maybe, there is quiet;
pass first under the bare branches,
beyond is a pool flanked with sedge,

and a swan among water-lilies.
But here too is a group
of men and women and children;
and the swan has forgotten its pride;
it thrusts its white neck among them,
and gobbles at nothing;
then tires of the cheat and sails off;
but its breast urges before it
a sheet of sodden newspaper
that, drifting away,
reveals beneath the immaculate white splendour
of its neck and wings
a breast black with scum.

Friend, we are beaten.

OGRE

THROUGH the open window can be seen
the poplars at the end of the garden
shaking in the wind,
a wall of green leaves so high
that the sky is shut off.

On the white table-cloth
a rose in a vase
— centre of a sphere of odour —
contemplates the crumbs and crusts
left from a meal:
cups, saucers, plates lie
here and there.

And a sparrow flies by the open window,
stops for a moment,
flutters his wings rapidly,
and climbs an aerial ladder

with his claws
that work close in
to his soft, brown/grey belly.

But behind the table is the face of a man.

The bird flies off.

CONES

THE blue mist of after-rain
fills all the trees;

the sunlight gilds the tops
of the poplar spires, far off,
behind the houses.

Here a branch sways
and there
a sparrow twitters.

The curtain's hem, rose-embroidered,
flutters, and half reveals
a burnt-red chimney pot.

The quiet in the room
bears patiently
a footfall on the street.

GLOOM

I SAT there in the dark
of the room and of my mind
thinking of men's treasons and bad faith,
sinking into the pit of my own weakness
before their strength of cunning.
Out over the gardens came the sound of some one
playing five-finger exercises on the piano.

Then
I gathered up within me all my powers
until outside of me was nothing:
I was all —
all stubborn, fighting sadness and revulsion.

And one came from the garden quietly,
and stood beside me.
She laid her hand on my hair;
she laid her cheek on my forehead, —
and caressed me with it;
but all my being rose to my forehead
to fight against this outside thing.
Something in me became angry;

withstood like a wall,
and would allow no entrance;
I hated her.

"What is the matter with you, dear?" she said.
"Nothing," I answered,
"I am thinking."
She stroked my hair and went away;
and I was still gloomy, angry, stubborn.

Then I thought:
she has gone away; she is hurt;
she does not know
what poison has been working in me.

Then I thought:
upstairs, her child is sleeping;
and I felt the presence
of the fields we had walked over, the roads we had
followed,
the flowers we had watched together,
before it came.

She had touched my hair, and only then did I feel it;
And I loved her once again.

And I came away,
full of the sweet and bitter juices of life;
and I lit the lamp in my room,
and made this poem.

TERROR

Eyes are tired;
the lamp burns,
and in its circle of light
papers and books lie
where chance and life
have placed them.

Silence sings all around me;
my head is bound with a band;
outside in the street a few footsteps;
a clock strikes the hour.

I gaze, and my eyes close,
slowly:

I doze; but the moment before sleep,
a voice calls my name
in my ear,
and the shock jolts my heart:
but when I open my eyes,
and look, first left, and then right . . .

no one is there.

CHALFONT SAINT GILES

THE low graves are all grown over
with forget/me/not,
and a rich/green grass
links each with each.
Old family vaults,
some within railings,
stand here and there,
crumbling, moss/eaten,
with the ivy growing up them
and diagonally across
the top projecting slab.
And over the vaults
lean the great lilac bushes
with their heart/shaped leaves
and their purple and white blossom.
A wall of ivy shuts off the darkness
of the elm/wood and the larches.

Walk quietly
along the mossy paths;
the stones of the humble dead
are hidden behind the blue mantle
of their forget/me/nots;

and before one grave so hidden
a widow kneels, with head bowed,
and the crape falling
over her shoulders.

The bells for evening church are ringing,
and the people come gravely
and with red, sun-burnt faces
through the gates in the wall.

Pass on;
this is the church-porch,
and within the bell-ringers,
men of the village in their Sunday clothes,
pull their bob-major
on the red and white grip
of the bell-ropes, that fly up,
and then fall snakily.
They stand there given wholly
to the rhythm and swing
of their traditional movements.

And the people pass between them
into the church;
but we are too sad and too reverent
to enter.

F. S. FLINT

WAR-TIME

If I go out of the door,
it will not be
to take the road to the left that leads
past the bovine quiet of houses
brooding over the cud of their daily content,
even though
the tranquillity of their gardens
is a lure that once was stronger;
even though
from privet hedge and mottled laurel
the young green peeps,
and the daffodils
and the yellow and white and purple crocuses
laugh from the smooth mould
of the garden beds
to the upright golden buds of the chestnut trees.
I shall not see
the almond blossom shaming
the soot-black boughs.

But to the right the road will lead me
to greater and greater disquiet;
into the swift rattling noise of the motor-'busses,

and the dust, the tattered paper —
the detritus of a city —
that swirls in the air behind them.
I will pass the shops where the prices
are judged day by day by the people,
and come to the place where five roads meet
with five tram-routes,
and where amid the din
of the vans, the lorries, the motor-'busses,
the clangorous tram-cars,
the news is shouted,
and soldiers gather, off-duty.

Here I can feel the heat of Europe's fever;
and I can make,
as each man makes the beauty of the woman he loves,
no spring and no woman's beauty,
while that is burning.

D. H. LAWRENCE

D. H. LAWRENCE

ERINNYES

THERE has been so much noise,
Bleeding and shouting and dying,
Clamour of death.

There are so many dead,
Many have died unconsenting,
Their ghosts are angry, unappeased.

So many ghosts among us,
Invisible, yet strong,
Between me and thee, so many ghosts of the slain.

They come back, over the white sea, in the mist,
Invisible, trooping home, the unassuaged ghosts
Endlessly returning on the uneasy sea.

They set foot on this land to which they have the right,
They return relentlessly, in the silence one knows their tread,
Multitudinous, endless, the ghosts coming home again.

They watch us, they press on us,
They press their claim upon us,
They are angry with us.

What do they want?
We are driven mad,
Madly we rush hither and thither:
Shouting, "Revenge, Revenge,"
Crying, "Pour out the blood of the foe,"
Seeking to appease with blood the insistent ghosts.

Out of blood rise up new ghosts,
Grey, stern, angry, unsatisfied,
The more we slay and are slain, the more we raise up new
ghosts against us.

Till we are mad with terror, seeing the slain
Victorious, grey, grisly ghosts in our streets,
Grey, unappeased ghosts seated in the music-halls.
The dead triumphant, and the quick cast down,
The dead, unassuaged and angry, silencing us,
Making us pale and bloodless, without resistance.

D. H. LAWRENCE

What do they want, the ghosts, what is it
They demand as they stand in menace over against us?
How shall we now appease whom we have raised up?

Since from blood poured out rise only ghosts again,
What shall we do, what shall we give to them?
What do they want, forever there on our threshold?

Must we open the doors, and admit them, receive them home,
And in the silence, reverently, welcome them,
And give them place and honour and service meet?

For one year's space, attend on our angry dead,
Soothe them with service and honour, and silence meet,
Strengthen, prepare them for the journey hence,
Then lead them to the gates of the unknown,
And bid farewell, oh stately travellers,
And wait till they are lost upon our sight.

Then we shall turn us home again to life
Knowing our dead are fitly housed in death,
Not roaming here disconsolate, angrily.

And we shall have new peace in this our life,
New joy to give more life, new bliss to live,
Sure of our dead in the proud halls of death.

PERFIDY

Hollow rang the house when I knocked at the door,
And I lingered on the threshold with my hand
Upraised to knock and knock once more:
Listening for the sound of her feet across the floor,
Hollow re-echoed my heart.

The low-hung lamps stretched down the road
With shadows drifting underneath,
With a music of soft, melodious feet
Quickening my hope as I hastened to meet
The low-hung light of her eyes.

The golden lamps down the street went out,
The last car trailed the night behind,
And I in the darkness wandered about
With a flutter of hope and of dark-shut doubt
In the dying lamp of my love.

Two brown ponies trotting slowly
Stopped at the dim-lit trough to drink.
The dark van drummed down the distance slowly,
And city stars so high and holy
Drew nearer to look in the streets.

A hasting car swept shameful past.
I saw her hid in the shadow,
I saw her step to the curb, and fast
Run to the silent door, where last
I had stood with my hand uplifted.
She clung to the door in her haste to enter,
Entered, and quickly cast
It shut behind her, leaving the street aghast.

AT THE WINDOW

The pine trees bend to listen to the autumn wind as it mutters
Something which sets the black poplars ashake with hysterical laughter;
While slowly the house of day is closing its eastern shutters.

Further down the valley the clustered tombstones recede
Winding about their dimness the mists' grey cerements, after
The street-lamps in the twilight have suddenly started to bleed.

The leaves fly over the window and whisper a word as they pass
To the face that leans from the darkness, intent, with two eyes of darkness
That watch forever earnestly from behind the window glass.

IN TROUBLE AND SHAME

I LOOK at the sweeling sunset
And wish I could go also
Through the red doors beyond the black/purple bar.

I wish that I could go
Through the red doors where I could put off
My shame like shoes in the porch
My pain like garments,
And leave my flesh discarded lying
Like luggage of some departed traveller
Gone one knows not where.

Then I would turn round
And seeing my cast/off body lying like lumber,
I would laugh with joy.

BROODING GRIEF

A YELLOW leaf from the darkness
Hops like a frog before me —
— Why should I start and stand still?

I was watching the woman that bore me
Stretched in the brindled darkness
Of the sick-room, rigid with will
To die —
And the quick leaf tore me
Back to this rainy swill
Of leaves and lamps and traffic mingled before me.

AMY LOWELL

AMY LOWELL

PATTERNS

I WALK down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whale-bone and brocade.

And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the plashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain
Comes down the garden paths.
The dripping never stops.
Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,
And he would stumble after
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his sword hilt and
the buckles on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover,
Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as
he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon—
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom
In my bosom,
Is a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the
Duke.
'Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell

Died in action Thursday sen'night."
As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.
"No," I told him.
"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.
No, no answer."
And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,
Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown.
Up and down I walked,
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.
In a month, here, underneath this lime,
We would have broke the pattern.
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.
He had a whim
That sunlight carried blessing.

And I answered, " It shall be as you have said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down,
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from em-
brace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?

SPRING DAY

BATH

THE day is fresh-washed and fair, and there is a smell of tulips and narcissus in the air.

The sunshine pours in at the bath-room window and bores through the water in the bath-tub in lathes and planes of greenish white. It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel, and cracks it to bright light.

Little spots of sunshine lie on the surface of the water and dance, dance, and their reflections wobble deliciously over the ceiling; a stir of my finger sets them whirring, reeling. I move a foot and the planes of light in the water jar. I lie back and laugh, and let the green-white water, the sun-flawed beryl water, flow over me. The day is almost too bright to bear, the green water covers me from the too bright day. I will lie here awhile and play with the water and the sun spots.

The sky is blue and high. A crow flaps by the window, and there is a whiff of tulips and narcissus in the air.

BREAKFAST TABLE

In the fresh-washed sunlight, the breakfast table is decked and white. It offers itself in flat surrender, tendering tastes, and smells, and colours, and metals, and grains, and the white

cloth falls over its side, draped and wide. Wheels of white glitter in the silver coffee pot, hot and spinning like catherine-wheels, they whirl, and twirl — and my eyes begin to smart, the little white, dazzling wheels prick them like darts. Placid and peaceful the rolls of bread spread themselves in the sun to bask. A stack of butter-pats, pyramidal, shout orange through the white, scream, flutter, call: "Yellow! Yellow! Yellow!" Coffee steam rises in a stream, clouds the silver tea-service with mist, and twists up into the sunlight, revolved, involuted, suspiring higher and higher, fluting in a thin spiral up the high blue sky. A crow flies by and croaks at the coffee steam. The day is new and fair with good smells in the air.

WALK

Over the street the white clouds meet, and sheer away without touching.

On the sidewalk boys are playing marbles. Glass marbles, with amber and blue hearts, roll together and part with a sweet clashing noise. The boys strike them with black and red striped agates. The glass marbles spit crimson when they are hit, and slip into the gutters under rushing brown water. I smell tulips and narcissus in the air, but there are no flowers anywhere, only white dust whipping up the street, and a girl with a gay spring hat and blowing skirts. The dust and the wind flirt at her ankles and her neat, high-

heeled patent leather shoes. Tap, tap, the little heels pat the pavement, and the wind rustles among the flowers on her hat.

A water-cart crawls slowly on the other side of the way. It is green and gay with new paint, and rumbles contentedly sprinkling clear water over the white dust. Clear zigzagging water which smells of tulips and narcissus.

The thickening branches make a pink "grisaille" against the blue sky.

Whoop! The clouds go dashing at each other and sheer away just in time. Whoop! And a man's hat careers down the street in front of the white dust, leaps into the branches of a tree, veers away and trundles ahead of the wind, jarring the sunlight into spokes of rose-colour and green.

A motor car cuts a swath through the bright air, sharp-beaked, irresistible, shouting to the wind to make way. A glare of dust and sunshine tosses together behind it, and settles down. The sky is quiet and high, and the morning is fair with fresh-washed air.

MIDDAY AND AFTERNOON

Swirl of crowded streets. Shock and recoil of traffic. The stock-still brick façade of an old church, against which the waves of people lurch and withdraw. Flare of sunshine down side-streets. Eddies of light in the windows of chemists' shops, with their blue, gold, purple jars, darting colours far

into the crowd. Loud bangs and tremors, murmurings out of high windows, whirling of machine belts, blurring of horses and motors. A quick spin and shudder of brakes on an electric car, and the jar of a church bell knocking against the metal blue of the sky. I am a piece of the town, a bit of blown dust, thrust along with the crowd. Proud to feel the pavement under me, reeling with feet. Feet tripping, skipping, lagging, dragging, plodding doggedly, or springing up and advancing on firm elastic insteps. A boy is selling papers, I smell them clean and new from the press. They are fresh like the air, and pungent as tulips and narcissus.

The blue sky pales to lemon, and great tongues of gold blind the shop-windows putting out their contents in a flood of flame.

NIGHT AND SLEEP

The day takes her ease in slippered yellow. Electric signs gleam out along the shop fronts, following each other. They grow, and grow, and blow into patterns of fire-flowers, as the sky fades. Trades scream in spots of light at the unruffled night. Twinkle, jab, snap, that means a new play ; and over the way: plop, drop, quiver is the sidelong sliver of a watchmaker's sign with its length on another street. A gigantic mug of beer effervesces to the atmosphere over a tall building, but the sky is high and has her own stars, why should she heed ours?

I leave the city with speed. Wheels whirl to take me back to my trees and my quietness. The breeze which blows with me is fresh-washed and clean, it has come but recently from the high sky. There are no flowers in bloom yet, but the earth of my garden smells of tulips and narcissus.

My room is tranquil and friendly. Out of the window I can see the distant city, a band of twinkling gems, little flower heads with no stems. I cannot see the beer glass, nor the letters of the restaurants and shops I passed, now the signs blur and all together make the city, glowing on a night of fine weather, like a garden stirring and blowing for the Spring.

The night is fresh-washed and fair and there is a whiff of flowers in the air.

Wrap me close, sheets of lavender. Pour your blue and purple dreams into my ears. The breeze whispers at the shutters and mutters queer tales of old days, and cobbled streets, and youths leaping their horses down marble stair-ways. Pale blue lavender, you are the colour of the sky when it is fresh-washed and fair . . . I smell the stars . . . they are like tulips and narcissus . . . I smell them in the air.

AMY LOWELL

STRAVINSKY'S THREE PIECES, "GROTESQUES" FOR STRING QUARTET

This Quartet was played from the manuscript by the Flonzaley Quartet during their season of 1915 and 1916. The poem is based upon the programme which M. Stravinsky appended to his piece, and is an attempt to reproduce the sound and movement of the music as far as is possible in another medium.

FIRST MOVEMENT

THIN-VOICED, nasal pipes
Drawing sound out and out
Until it is a screeching thread,
Sharp and cutting, sharp and cutting,
It hurts.
Whee-e-e!
Bump! Bump! Tong-ti-bump!
There are drums here,
Banging,
And wooden shoes beating the round, grey stones
Of the market-place.
Whee-e-e!
Sabots slapping the worn, old stones,
And a shaking and cracking of dancing bones,
Clumsy and hard they are,

And uneven,
Losing half a beat
Because the stones are slippery.
Bump-e-ty-tong! Whee-e-e! Tong!
The thin Spring leaves
Shake to the banging of shoes.
Shoes beat, slap,
Shuffle, rap,
And the nasal pipes squeal with their pigs'
voices,
Little pigs' voices
Weaving among the dancers,
A fine, white thread
Linking up the dancers.
Bang! Bump! Tong!
Petticoats,
Stockings,
Sabots,
Delirium flapping its thigh-bones;
Red, blue, yellow,
Drunkenness steaming in colours;
Red, yellow, blue,
Colours and flesh weaving together,
In and out, with the dance,
Coarse stuffs and hot flesh weaving together.
Pigs' cries white and tenuous,

White and painful,
White and—
Bump!
Tong!

SECOND MOVEMENT

Pale violin music whiffs across the moon,
A pale smoke of violin music blows over the
moon,
Cherry petals fall and flutter,
And the white Pierrot,
Wreathed in the smoke of the violins,
Splashed with cherry petals falling, falling,
Claws a grave for himself in the fresh earth
With his finger-nails.

THIRD MOVEMENT

An organ growls in the heavy roof-groins of a
church,
It wheezes and coughs.
The nave is blue with incense,
Writhing, twisting,
Snaking over the heads of the chanting priests.
Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine;
The priests whine their bastard Latin

And the censers swing and click.
The priests walk endlessly
Round and round,
Droning their Latin
Off the key.
The organ crashes out in a flaring chord
And the priests hitch their chant up half a tone.
Dies illa, dies iræ,
Calamitatis et miseriæ,
Dies magna et amara valde.
A wind rattles the leaded windows.
The little pear-shaped candle-flames leap and flutter.
Dies illa, dies iræ,
The swaying smoke drifts over the altar.
Calamitatis et miseriæ,
The shuffling priests sprinkle holy water.
Dies magna et amara valde.
And there is a stark stillness in the midst of them,
Stretched upon a bier.
His ears are stone to the organ,
His eyes are flint to the candles,
His body is ice to the water.
Chant, priests,
Whine, shuffle, genuflect.

He will always be as rigid as he is now
Until he crumbles away in a dust heap.
Lacrymosa dies illa,
Qua resurget ex favilla
Judicandus homo reus.
Above the grey pillars, the roof is in darkness.

THE END

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SOME IMAGIST POETS, 1917

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1917

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The poem "Streets," on page 79, is an adaptation from the Japanese of Yakura Sanjin, 1798, a prose translation of which, made from a German translation, appears in Mr. Arthur Davison Ficke's "Chats on Japanese Prints."

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RICHARD ALDINGTON

RICHARD ALDINGTON

VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

THIS is an old and very cruel god . . .

We will endure;
We will try not to wince
When he crushes and rends us.

If indeed it is for your sakes,
If we perish or moan in torture,
Or stagger under sordid burdens
That you may live —
Then we can endure.

If our wasted blood
Makes bright the page
Of poets yet to be;
If this our tortured life
Save from destruction's nails
Gold words of a Greek long dead;
Then we can endure,

Then hope,
Then watch the sun rise
Without utter bitterness.

But, O thou old and very cruel god,
Take, if thou canst, this bitter cup from us.

BONDAGE

I HAVE been a spendthrift —
Dropping from lazy fingers
Quiet coloured hours,
Fluttering away from me
Like oak and beech leaves in October.

I have lived keenly and wastefully,
Like a bush or a sun insect —
Lived sensually and thoughtfully,
Loving the flesh and the beauty of this world —
Green ivy about ruined towers,
The out-pouring of the grey sea,
And the ecstasy
Of a pale clear sky at sunset.

I have been prodigal of love
For cities and for lonely places;
I have tried not to hate mankind;
I have gathered sensations
Like ripe fruits in a rich orchard. . . .

All this is gone;
There are no leaves, no sea,
No shade of a rich orchard,
Only a sterile, dusty waste,
Empty and threatening.

I long vainly for solitude
And the lapse of silent hours;
I am frantic to throw off
My heavy cloth and leather garments,
To set free my feet and body;
And I am so far from beauty
That a yellow daisy seems to clutch my heart
With eager searching petals,
And I am grateful even to humility
For the taste of pure, clean bread.

A MOMENT'S INTERLUDE

One night I wandered alone from my comrades' huts;
The grasshoppers chirped softly
In the warm misty evening;
Bracken fronds beckoned from the darkness
With exquisite frail green fingers;
The tree gods muttered affectionately about me,
And from the distance came the grumble of a kindly train.

I was so happy to be alone,
So full of love for the great speechless earth,
That I could have laid my cheek in the wet grasses
And caressed with my lips the hard sinewy body
Of Earth, the cherishing mistress of bitter lovers.

FIELD MANŒUVRES

(*Outpost Duty*)

THE long autumn grass beneath my body
Soaks my clothes in dew;
Where my knees press into the ground
I can feel the damp earth.

In my nostrils is a smell of crushed grass,
Wet pine-cones and bark.

Through the bronze pine trunks
Glitters a silver segment of road.

Interminable squadrons of silver and grey horses
Pace in long ranks the blank fields of heaven.

There is no sound;
The wind hisses gently through the pine-needles;
The flutter of a finch's wings about my head
Is violent as distant thunder,
And the shrill flight of a gnat
Sounds loud and clear.

RICHARD ALDINGTON

I am "to fire at the enemy column
After it has passed" —
But my rifle (loaded with "blank")
Lies untouched before me,
My spirit follows the gliding clouds
And my lips murmur of the mother of beauty
Standing breast-high in golden broom
Among the English pine-woods!

DAWN

THE grim dawn lightens thin bleak clouds;
In the hill clefts beyond the flooded meadows
Lies death-pale, death-still mist.

We trudge along wearily,
Heavy with lack of sleep,
Spiritless, yet with pretence of gaiety.

The sun brings crimson to the colourless sky;
Light gleams from brass and steel —
We trudge on wearily —

O God, end this bleak anguish
Soon, soon, with vivid crimson death,
End it in mist-pale sleep!

INARTICULATE GRIEF

Let the sea beat its thin torn hands
In anguish against the shore,
Let it moan
Between headland and cliff;
Let the sea shriek out its agony
Across waste sands and marshes,
And clutch great ships,
Tearing them plate from steel plate
In reckless anger;
Let it break the white bulwarks
Of harbour and city;
Let it sob and scream and laugh
In a sharp fury,
With white salt tears
Wet on its writhen face;
Ah! let the sea still be mad
And crash in madness among the shaking rocks —
For the sea is the cry of our sorrow.

IMAGES

I

THROUGH the dark pine trunks
Silver and yellow gleam the clouds
And the sun;
The sea is faint purple.
My love, my love, I shall never reach you.

II

You are beautiful
As a straight red fox-glove
Among green plants;
I stretched out my hand to caress you:
It is blistered by the envious nettles.

III

I have spent hours this morning
Seeking in the brook
For a clear pebble
To remind me of your eyes.

And all the sleepless hours of night
I think of you.

IV

Your kisses are poignant,
Ah! why must I leave you?

Here alone I scribble and re-scribble
The words of a long-dead Greek poet:
"Love, thou art terrible,
Ah, Love, thou art bitter-sweet!"

CAPTIVE

THEY have torn the gold tettinx
From my hair;
And wrenched the bronze sandals
From my ankles.

They have taken from me my friend
Who knew the holy wisdom of poets,
Who had drunk at the feast
Where Simonides sang.

No more do I walk the calm gardens
In the white mist of olives;
No more do I take the rose-crown
From the white hands of a maiden.

I, who was free, am a slave;
The Muses have forgotten me,
The gods do not hear me.

Here there are no flowers to love;
But afar off I dream that I see
Bent poppies and the deathless asphodel.

R. V. AND ANOTHER

VAGABONDS of beauty,
Wistful exquisite waifs
From a lost, and a forgotten, and a lovely land,
We cannot comfort you
Though our souls yearn for you.

You are delicate strangers
In a gloomy town,
Stared at and hated—
Gold crocus blossoms in a drab lane.

We cannot comfort you;
Your life is anguish;
All we can do—
Mutely bring pungent herbs and branches of oak
And resinous scented pine wreaths
To hide the crown of thorny pain
Crushing your white frail foreheads.

PRAYER

I AM a garden of red tulips
And late daffodils and bay-hedges,
A small sunk garden
About an oblong pool
With three grey lead Dutch tanks —
I am this garden shattered and blown
With a day-long western gale
And bursts of rapid rain.

There are dank petals in the ruffled waters,
And muddy flowers upon the path.
The grass is covered with torn leaves.

God of gardens, dear small god of gardens,
Grant me faint glow of sunlight,
A last bird hopping in the quiet haze,
Then let the night swoop swiftly,
Fold round and crush out life
For ever.

H. D.

H. D.

THE GOD

I

I ASKED of your face:
is it dark,
set beneath heavy locks,
circled with stiff ivy-fruit,
clear,
cut with great hammer-stroke,
brow, nose and mouth,
mysterious and far distant
from my sense.

I asked:
can he from his portals of ebony
carved with grapes,
turn toward the earth?

I even spoke this blasphemy
in my thoughts:

the earth is evil,
given over to evil —
we are lost.

II

And in a moment
you have altered this.

Beneath my feet, the rocks
have no weight
against the rush of cyclamen,
fire-tipped, ivory-pointed,
white.

Beneath my feet the flat rocks
have no strength
against the deep purple flower-embers,
cyclamen, wine spilled.

III

As I stood among the bare rocks
where salt lay,

peeled and flaked
in its white drift,

I thought I would be the last
you would want,
I thought I would but scatter salt
on the ripe grapes.

I thought the vine-leaves
would curl under,
leaf and leaf-point
at my touch,

the yellow and green grapes
would have dropped,
my very glance must shatter
the purple fruit.

I had drawn away into the salt,
myself, a shell
emptied of life.

IV

I pluck the cyclamen
red by wine-red
and place the petals
stiff ivory and bright fire
against my flesh.

Now I am powerless
to draw back
for the sea is cyclamen-purple,
cyclamen-red, colour of the last grapes,
colour of the purple of the flowers,
cyclamen-coloured and dark.

ADONIS

I

EACH of us like you
has died once,
each of us like you
has passed through drift of wood-leaves,
cracked and bent
and tortured and unbent
in the winter frost —
then burnt into gold points,
lighted afresh,
crisp amber, scales of gold-leaf,
gold turned and re-welded
in the sun-heat.

Each of us like you
has died once,
each of us has crossed an old wood-path
and found the winter leaves
so golden in the sun-fire
that even the live wood-flowers
were dark.

II

Not the gold on the temple-front
where you stand,
is as gold as this,
not the gold that fastens your sandal,
nor the gold reft
through your chiselled locks
is as gold as this last year's leaf,
not all the gold hammered and wrought
and beaten
on your lover's face,
brow and bare breast
is as golden as this.

Each of us like you
has died once,
each of us like you
stands apart, like you
fit to be worshipped.

PYGMALION

I

SHALL I let myself be caught
in my own light,
shall I let myself be broken
in my own heat,
or shall I cleft the rock as of old
and break my own fire
with its surface?

Does this fire thwart me
and my craft,
or my work —
does it cloud this light;
which is the god,
which the stone
the god takes for his use?

II

Which am I,
The stone or the power
that lifts the rock from the earth?

Am I the master of this fire,
is this fire my own strength?

Am I the master of this
swirl upon swirl of light —
have I made it as in old times
I made the gods from the rock?

Have I made this fire from myself,
or is this arrogance —
is this fire a god
that seeks me in the dark?

III

I made image upon image for my use,
I made image upon image, for the grace
of Pallas was my flint
and my help was Hephæstos.

I made god upon god
step from the cold rock,
I made the gods less than men
for I was a man and they my work.

And now what is it that has come to pass
for fire has shaken my hand,
my strivings are dust.

IV

Now what is it that has come to pass?
Over my head, fire stands,
my marbles are alert.

Each of the gods, perfect,
cries out from a perfect throat:
you are useless,
no marble can bind me,
no stone suggest.

V

They have melted into the light
and I am desolate,
they have melted,
each from his plinth,
each one departs.

They have gone,
what agony can express my grief?

Each from his marble base
has stepped into the light
and my work is for naught.

VI

Now am I the power
that has made this fire
as of old I made the gods
start from the rocks —
am I the god
or does this fire carve me
for its use?

EURYDICE

I

So you have swept me back —
I who could have walked with the live souls
above the earth,
I who could have slept among the live flowers
at last.

So for your arrogance
and your ruthlessness
I am swept back
where dead lichens drip
dead cinders upon moss of ash.

So for your arrogance
I am broken at last,
I who had lived unconscious,
who was almost forgot.

If you had let me wait
I had grown from listlessness
into peace —

if you had let me rest with the dead,
I had forgot you
and the past.

II

Here only flame upon flame
and black among the red sparks,
streaks of black and light
grown colourless.

Why did you turn back,
that hell should be reinhabited
of myself thus
swept into nothingness?

Why did you turn,
why did you glance back —
why did you hesitate for that moment,
why did you bend your face
caught with the flame of the upper earth
above my face?

What was it that crossed my face
with the light from yours
and your glance?

What was it you saw in my face —
the light of your own face,
the fire of your own presence?

What had my face to offer
but reflex of the earth —
hyacinth colour
caught from the raw fissure in the rock
where the light struck,
and the colour of azure crocuses
and the bright surface of gold crocuses
and of the wind-flower,
swift in its veins as lightning
and as white.

III

Saffron from the fringe of the earth,
wild saffron that has bent
over the sharp edge of earth,
all the flowers that cut through the earth,
all, all the flowers are lost.

Everything is lost,
everything is crossed with black,

black upon black
and worse than black —
this colourless light.

IV

Fringe upon fringe
of blue crocuses,
crocuses, walled against blue of themselves,
blue of that upper earth,
blue of the depth upon depth of flowers —
lost!

Flowers —
if I could have taken once my breath of them,
enough of them,
more than earth,
even than of the upper earth,
had passed with me
beneath the earth!

If I could have caught up from the earth,
the whole of the flowers of the earth,
if once I could have breathed into myself
the very golden crocuses

and the red,
and the very golden hearts of the first saffron,
the whole of the golden mass,
the whole of the great fragrance,
I could have dared the loss.

V

So for your arrogance
and your ruthlessness
I have lost the earth
and the flowers of the earth,
and the live souls above the earth,

and you who passed across the light
and reached
ruthless —

you who have your own light,
who are to yourself a presence,
who need no presence.

Yet for all your arrogance
and your glance,
I tell you this —

such loss is no loss,
such terror, such coils and strands and pitfalls
of blackness,
such terror
is no loss.

Hell is no worse than your earth
above the earth,
hell is no worse —
no — nor your flowers
nor your veins of light
nor your presence,
a loss.

My hell is no worse than yours
though you pass among the flowers and speak
with the spirits above earth.

VI

Against the black
I have more fervour
than you in all the splendour of that place,
against the blackness
and the stark grey
I have more light!

And the flowers —
if I should tell you,
you would turn from your own fit paths
toward hell —
turn again and glance back

and I would sink into a place
even more terrible than this.

VII

At least I have the flowers of myself
and my thoughts — no god
can take that!
I have the fervour of myself for a presence
and my own spirit for light.

And my spirit with its loss
knows this:
though small against the black,
small against the formless rocks,
hell must break before I am lost.

Before I am lost,
hell must open like a red rose
for the dead to pass.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

LINCOLN

I

Like a gaunt, scraggly pine
Which lifts its head above the mournful sandhills;
And patiently, through dull years of bitter silence,
Untended and uncared for, starts to grow.

Ungainly, labouring, huge,
The wind of the north has twisted and gnarled its branches;
Yet in the heat of midsummer days, when thunder-clouds
ring the horizon,
A nation of men shall rest beneath its shade.

And it shall protect them all,
Hold everyone safe there, watching aloof in silence;
Until at last one mad stray bolt from the zenith
Shall strike it in an instant down to earth.

II

There was a darkness in this man ; an immense and hollow
darkness,
Of which we may not speak, nor share with him, nor
enter;
A darkness through which strong roots stretched down-
wards into the earth
Towards old things;

Towards the herdman-kings who walked the earth and
spoke with God,
Towards the wanderers who sought for they knew not what,
and found their goal at last;
Towards the men who waited, only waited patiently when
all seemed lost,
Many bitter winters of defeat ;

Down to the granite of patience
These roots swept, knotted fibrous roots, prying, piercing,
seeking,
And drew from the living rock and the living waters about
it
The red sap to carry upwards to the sun.

Not proud, but humble,
Only to serve and pass on, to endure to the end through service;
For the ax is laid at the roots of the trees, and all that bring not forth good fruit
Shall be cut down on the day to come and cast into the fire.

III

There is a silence abroad in the land to-day,
And in the hearts of men, a deep and anxious silence;
And, because we are still at last, those bronze lips slowly open,
Those hollow and weary eyes take on a gleam of light.

Slowly a patient, firm-syllabled voice cuts through the endless silence
Like labouring oxen that drag a plow through the chaos of rude clay-fields:
"I went forward as the light goes forward in early spring,
But there were also many things which I left behind.

"Tombs that were quiet;
One, of a mother, whose brief light went out in the darkness,

One, of a loved one, the snow on whose grave is long falling,
One, only of a child, but it was mine.

Have you forgot your graves? Go, question them in anguish,
Listen long to their unstirred lips. From your hostages to silence,
Learn there is no life without death, no dawn without sunsetting,
No victory but to him who has given all."

IV

The clamour of cannon dies down, the furnace-mouth of the battle is silent.
The midwinter sun dips and descends, the earth takes on afresh its bright colours.
But he whom we mocked and obeyed not, he whom we scorned and mistrusted,
He has descended, like a god, to his rest.

Over the uproar of cities,
Over the million intricate threads of life wavering and crossing,

In the midst of problems we know not, tangling, perplexing,
ensnaring,
Rises one white tomb alone.

Beam over it, stars,
Wrap it round, stripes — stripes red for the pain that he
bore for you —
Enfold it forever, O flag, rent, soiled, but repaired through
your anguish ;
Long as you keep him there safe, the nations shall bow to
your law.

Strew over him flowers :
Blue forget-me-nots from the north, and the bright pink
arbutus
From the east, and from the west rich orange blossom,
But from the heart of the land take the passion-flower ;

Rayed, violet, dim,
With the nails that pierced, the cross that he bore and the
circlet,
And beside it there lay also one lonely snow-white mag-
nolia,
Bitter for remembrance of the healing which has passed.

BLACKBERRY-HARVEST

UNDER the sun which seems to halt and drip
Down the long yellow line of heavy beeches,
Striding in order along the hillside,
There is a hedge of bramble and rose.
Hour on hour I have wandered beside it,
Heaping my basket with gleaming fruit,
Staining my fingers and tearing my hands,
Letting the clusters clutch me,
Letting them wind their hooked fingers about me —
seeking no way of escape.

Purple-blue globes amid the brambles,
Tangled with scarlet hips of roses,
And the hazy, lazy autumn
Drifting out with the drifting leaves;
Down the hill the slow movements of browsing cattle,
Up the hill the shrill laughter of children
Fighting their way through the tangle
Towards the drooping spoil.

Grey 'old-man's-beard' covers densely the tops of the brambles,
And against it project the scarlet hips of the roses,

Against the greenery flashing
Like lanterns swung through the leaves: —
Up above them, wavering slowly,
The undergrowth flares out in scarlet,
And, above it, the yellow tips of the beeches
Almost motionless,
Now and then drop slowly a spear of flame to the earth.

Under the sun which seems to stop and quiver
At the edge of the hill, under the ledge of the beech-trees,
Like a wave arrested suddenly by a cliff of yellow rock;
Slipping quickly down to the ocean again,
Filling with haze the distant dusty ocean
Of stubble-fields on the horizon —
The air is thick with heavy sweetness
Perfume of ripening berries,
Crimson turning to purple,
Wine of the autumn sun.

And there wells up in me a drunken impulse of autumn,
To fling myself in the tangle;
Let it tear my clothes to tatters and slash across my cheeks;
To crush the berries and trample
Their sweetness, with the laughter
Of red cheeked children scrambling

Across the fallen leaves: —
To find myself a faun again, freed from the restraint of
houses,
With red-stained face a-leering
Out of the dense, deep web of interlacing thorn:
A girdle of scarlet berries slung carelessly over my shoulder,
A crown of glistening purple berries gleaming in my hair.

MOONLIGHT

THE sky is covered with light white wisps of cloud;
Afar in the pale and hazy sky
A lone star glitters — flickers — glitters
Over the thin-leaved motionless trees,
Standing in washes of darkness
Upon the blue grey of the distance,
Which seems so far — so remote — so very far
As if the moon itself
Were nearer earth than it.

Now a thin cloud blows suddenly across the face of the moon,
And the patterns of the shadows run quickly together;
The mysterious earth sinks down
Beneath the darkness pressing firmly upon it.
A vague leaf glances coldly as the moonlight
Strikes again athwart the tangle of lightly-swaying tree-tops,
And where the stems are closely ranked together
In the hollows there is darkness,
As if they were intently watching something,
Which they would never let escape.

This night is not as is the night of cities,
Where all seems like a flitting dance of phantoms
With wavering traffic
Under red lamps;
For I have seen men passing to the theatre
Who seemed to walk as people walk in sleep,
Deliberate, gravely smiling,
With passionless, shut eyes;
And I have seen the trees asleep in daylight,
Rocked by the wind and nodding
To every gossipy bird: —
But in the night no woodcutter hews the hard bark,
And not a wind lifts up a single leaf-tip
But that the tree has challenged it to blow.

On the other side of the house, where the road passes,
The moon lights up a neighbour's red-tiled roof-top;
It looks like an old tortoise sleeping soundly
Upon the shore of an undiscovered sea.

DAWN

Above the east horizon,
The great red flower of the dawn
Opens slowly, petal by petal;
The trees emerge from darkness
With ghostly silver leaves,
Dew-powdered.
Now consciousness emerges
Reluctantly out of tides of sleep;
Finding with cold surprise
No strange new thing to match its dreams,
But merely the familiar shapes
Of bedpost, window-pane, and wall.

Within the city,
The streets which were the last to fall to sleep,
Hold yet stale fragments of the night.
Sleep oozes out of stagnant ash-barrels,
Sleep drowses over litter in the streets.
Sleep nods upon the milkcans by back doors.
And, in shut rooms,
Behind the lowered window-blinds,
Drawn white faces unwittingly flout the day.

But, at the edges of the city,
Sleep is already washed away;
Light filters through the moist green leaves,
It runs into the cups of flowers,
It leaps in sparks through drops of dew,
It whirls against the window-panes
With waking birds;
Blinds are rolled up and chimneys smoke,
Feet clatter past on silent paths,
And down white vanishing ways of steel,
A dozen railway trains converge
Upon night's stronghold

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

ARMIES

Under the soft grey windswept sky,
Between two rows of yellow trees
Soddenly dripping;
The brown backs of an army
Go marching.

Like an enormous snake with undulatory movement,
Past the old church with scarlet ivy hooding its stiff grey walls,
Past the drowsy churchyard,
Where wet leaves cling to the stones,
Up the hill and past the village,
Through the curving lines of hedgerows,
Beyond the brow of the hill, lost in brown stubble,
The brown backs of an army
Go writhing into the distance.

Under the flying clouds that hide the eastern sky,
Footfalls, footfalls, repeated clamour of footfalls; —
One, two, left, right, the road is full of them —
And the noise rises and strives to cling
To the wet wind-blown branches,

It penetrates the empty church and echoes up the aisle.
Whirling leaves drift over the endless footfalls,
Striving to hush them to quiet;
O agonised hands!

Under the soft grey rainy sky
Of October;
Under the swirling leaves that fall and settle amid them,
Silent files of men, stiffly-backed and sombre,
With a jagged fringe of rifles projecting from every shoulder,
Move like an immense machine with a million feet;
Marching,
Into the darkness steadily marching,
Incessantly swinging and falling,
Swallowed up in the twistings of the hills,
Vanishing amid the confused brown stubble of the earth.

And the old earth holds its breath and listens:
Was that a shot, a sob, a strangling cry?
Silence. Only the trees hold out their empty arms in yearning,
And a flight of rooks across them goes clanging away before night.

F. S. FLINT

F. S. FLINT

SEARCHLIGHT

THERE has been no sound of guns,
no roar of exploding bombs;
but the darkness has an edge
that grits the nerves of the sleeper.

He awakens;
nothing disturbs the stillness,
save perhaps the light, slow flap,
once only, of the curtain
dim in the darkness.

Yet there is something else
that drags him from his bed;
and he stands in the darkness
with his feet cold against the floor
and the cold air round his ankles.
He does not know why,
but he goes to the window and sees
a beam of light, miles high,

dividing the night into two before him,
still, stark and throbbing.

The houses and gardens beneath
lie under the snow
quiet and tinged with purple.

There has been no sound of guns,
no roar of exploding bombs;
only that watchfulness hidden among the snow-covered
houses,
and that great beam thrusting back into heaven
the light taken from it.

ZEPPELINS

THE bedroom is darkness.
A dim cloud in one direction
is the window with its curtains;
the leaves of the trees outside rustle on one another.
I fall to sleep.

How long have I slept?
A voice calls, a bell rings;
the clamour and the ringing lengthen;
I turn; it continues;
not mine the name I hear,
and yet
there is alarm in it that concerns me?
Am I awake?
Over my nightdress
I huddle my clothes;
thrust my bare feet into slippers;
and run down the stairs.

From a blur of female faces
distraught eyes stand out,
and a woman's voice cries:

"The Zeppelins — they are attacking us;
Avenue Road[1] is alight,
High Mydelton[1] is burning.
Did you not hear the guns?
Oh, what shall we do?"

We make jokes to reassure them.
I shiver: chill? excitement? fear?

Am I awake?
My mind has been washed by sleep and left limp.
The trees in the gardens opposite
stand out behind the houses,
a dark fretwork against the sky;
and everywhere is stillness.

Yet something slinks overhead through the sky;
men will say that they saw it pass, and then
a flash, a thud, —
a house has been cleft through three stories, and burns;
and children burn in their beds,
and men are burned rescuing them,
an old man and woman are burned to death
because the staircase has been smashed away.

[1] Fictitious names.

But we do not know this yet;
we have only heard explosions,
and have seen the glow of fires in the sky,
quickly gone.

We climb upstairs to the top story,—
to see!
There is nothing to see . . .
But the silence and stillness are sinister.
What has been taken away, what added?
Brick and stone have become unreal,
and only the primæval trees remain,
with the primæval fear behind them and among them . . .

What is that behind the trees?—
A flame-coloured circle of light that glows
and grows brighter and dimmer by turns.
Is it an airship on fire?
It burns on, and moves nearer, slowly;
it swings clear of the trees—
the moon!

DEVONSHIRE

THE little Heddon roars over its stones towards its mouth
between two cliffs mounting up, one with the grey-brown
haze
of the budding oakwoods and the line of the path athwart
them,
as though cut with a knife;
and the other grey with loose shale, and here and there
the gorse in bloom over the dead, brown bracken,
that springs again, green once more, from its death.
The little Heddon roars over its stones between
its violets, primroses, and celandines to the sea.

And, friends, what am I doing here beside you and the
Heddon?
Why did I come to you with my heart-ache and my
cares,
falsely to brighten your life with the foil of my darkness?
Why did I come to your pinewoods?

The little Heddon roars over its stones to the sea.

F. S. FLINT

My life grated on in its groove, and that groove
Brought me to you, but see! the little Heddon roared over
my brain,
and for a day washed the mist from it, cleared the clog of it,
and the groove is no longer there.

Yet I shall leave you; I shall take back my groove,
with a keener edge to my heart-ache and a different tune:
the little Heddon roaring over my brain to the sea!

SOLDIERS

To R. A.

BROTHER,
I saw you on a muddy road
in France
pass by with your battalion,
rifle at the slope, full marching order,
arm swinging;
and I stood at ease,
folding my hands over my rifle,
with my battalion.
You passed me by, and our eyes met.
We had not seen each other since the days
we climbed the Devon hills together:
our eyes met, startled;
and, because the order was Silence,
we dared not speak.

O face of my friend,
alone distinct of all that company,
you went on, you went on,
into the darkness;
and I sit here at my table,

holding back my tears,
with my jaw set and my teeth clenched,
knowing I shall not be
even so near you as I saw you
in my dream.

DUSK

To J. C.

HERE where the brown leaves fall
from elm and chestnut and plane-tree;
here where the brown leaves drift
along the paths to the lake
where the waterfowl breast the waves
that are ridged by the wind, —

you spoke of your art and life,
of men you had known who betrayed you,
men who fell short of friendship
and women who fell short of love;
but, abiding beyond them, your art
held you to life, transformed it, became it,
and so you were free.

And I told you of all my weakness, —
my growing strength to resist
the appeal to my heart and eyes
of sorrowful, beautiful things;
and the strength of this outer husk
I had permitted to grow and protect me
was its pitiful measure.

You said: There are cracks in the husk.
It grew to your measure perhaps once;
but you are now breaking through it, and soon
it will fall apart and away from you.
Like a tree content with its fate,
you would not have known it was there
if it had grown to remain.

The cold wind blew the brown leaves
on to the lovers beneath,
who crept closer together for warmth
and closer still for love.

The peacocks perched in the branches
hawked their harsh cry at the golden
round moon that loomed over the tree-tops.

And the sound of our feet on the gravel
for a time was answer enough
to the broken mesh of our thoughts.

I said: I have wife and children,
a girl and a boy: I love them;

the gold of their hair is all the gold
of my thoughts ; the blue of their eyes
is all the purity of my vision ;
the rhythm of their life is more to be watched
than the cadences of my poems.

And you asked me :
Have you taken refuge behind them ?
Do you not fear to lose your life
in saving it for them ?
Be brave ! Be brave ! The waters are deep,
the waves run high ; but you are a swimmer :
strike out !

The cold wind blew the brown leaves
deeper and deeper into the dusk ;
the peacocks had hushed their cries ;
the moon had turned her gold into silver,
and between the black lace of two trees
one star shone clearly.

O night !
have I deserved your beauty ?

D. H. LAWRENCE

D. H. LAWRENCE

TERRA NUOVA

I

And so I cross into another world,
shyly and in homage linger for an invitation
from this unknown that I would trespass on.

I am very glad, and all alone in the world,
all alone, and very glad, in a new world
where I am disembarked at last.

I could cry for joy, because I am in a new world, just ventured in;
I could cry with joy, and quite freely, there is nobody to know.

And whosoever the unknown people of this unknown world will be,
they will never understand my weeping for joy to be adventuring among them,

because it will be a gesture of the old world I am mak-
ing,
which they will not understand, because it is quite, quite
foreign to them.

II

I was so weary of the world
I was so sick of it.
Everything was tainted with myself;
sky, trees, flowers, birds, water,
people, houses, streets, vehicles, machines,
nations, armies, war, peace-making,
work, recreation, governing, anarchy,
it was all tainted with myself, I knew it all to start with
because it was all myself.

When I gathered flowers, I knew it was myself gathering
my own flowers;
when I went in a train, I knew myself going in my own
train;
when I heard the cannon of the war, my ears listened to my
own cannon,
when I saw the torn dead, I knew it was my own torn dead
body,
it was all me, I had done it all.

III

I shall never forget the maniacal horror of it, in the end,
when everything was me, I knew it all already, anticipated
it all;
because I was the author and the result
I was the God and the creation at once;
Creator, I looked at my creation,
Created, I looked at myself, the Creator.
It was a maniacal horror in the end.

IV

I was the lover, I kissed the woman,
and, God of horror, I was kissing also myself;
I was a father and begetter of children,
and oh, oh horror, I was begetting myself in my own body.

V

At last came death, sufficiency of death,
and that at last relieved me, I died.
I buried my beloved — it was good; I buried myself and
was dead.
War came, and hatred, and every hand raised to murder.
Good, very good, every hand raised to murder!
Very good, very good, I am also a murderer! It is my desire.

It is good; I can strike and strike and see them all fall,
the mutilated, horror-struck youths, in a multitude,
one and another, and then in clusters together,
smashed, and broken with blood, and then burned in heaps,
going up in fetid smoke to get rid of them,
the murdered bodies of youths and men and me, in heaps,
heaps, in heaps, in horrible reeking heaps,
till it is almost enough, till I am killed perhaps:

thousands and thousands of gaping, hideous foul dead,
that are youths and men and me, being burned with oil, and
consumed
in corrupt thick smoke, that rolls
and taints and blackens the sky, till at last
it is dark, as dark as night, or death, or hell,
and I am dead, and trodden like earth in the sodden earth,
dead, and trodden to nought in the sour black earth,
dead, and trodden to nought, trodden to nought.

VI

Ah, but it is good to have died and been trodden out!
Trodden to nought in black, dead earth,
quite to nought
to nothing;
absolutely to nothing.

VII

When it is quite, quite nothing, then it is everything.
When I am trodden quite out, quite, quite out,
every vestige gone — then I am here,
discovered, setting my foot on another world,
landed, claiming another terrestrial life,
disembarked from the voyage of death — not risen, not born again,
but disembarked from out the horrible foul ship, into a new heaven and earth,
new beyond knowledge of newness, alive beyond life,
glad beyond glory and furthest conception of pride,
living where life was never yet dreamed, where nothing was hinted at,
that is, now, in the world, with me and with life.

VIII

I put out my hand in the night, one night, and my hand
touched that which was verily not me,
verily it was not me.
Where I had been, was a sudden blaze,
a sudden flaring blaze of new being.
So I put my hand out further, again, and further
felt that which was not I,

it verily was not I.
It was the Unknown.

I was a blaze leaping up,
I was a burst of light, a tiger,
I was greedy, I was mad for the Unknown,
I, new-landed, new-risen, starved, disembarked from the tomb,
starved from a life of selfless consuming myself,
here was I now, arriving, with my hand stretched out
and touching the real Unknown, the Unknown, the Unknown.

And oh, I can only say
that I can touch, I can feel the Unknown;
I, the first comer.
Cortes, Pisarro, Columbus, they are nothing,
I am the first Comer
I am the discoverer
I have found the other world.

Eureka!
The Unknown, the Unknown!
I am thrown upon the shore,
I am covering myself with the sand,

I am filling my mouth with the earth,
I am burrowing my body into the soil:
the Unknown!

IX

It was the flank of my wife
I touched with my hand, I clutched with my hand,
rising, reaching from the tomb,
it was the flank of my wife, whom I had married years ago,
at whose side I have lain for a thousand nights,
and all the while, she was I, she was I,
I touched her, it was I who touched and I who was touched.

Yet rising from the tomb, flung from the ship,
stretching out my hand, my hand flung like a drowning
man's hand on the shore,
I touched her flank, and knew myself carried by the cur-
rent in death
over to the new world, touching the other shore,
flotsam, jetsam, thrown and washed back on the shore,
yet grasping the new world,
clutching to climb out on the new and timeless world.

AMY LOWELL

AMY LOWELL

LACQUER PRINTS

STREETS

As I wandered through the eight hundred and eight streets
of the city,
I saw nothing so beautiful
As the Women of the Green Houses,
With their girdles of spun gold,
And their long-sleeved dresses,
Coloured like the graining of wood.
As they walk,
The hems of their outer garments flutter open,
And the blood-red linings glow like sharp-toothed maple
leaves
In Autumn.

NEAR KIOTO

As I crossed over the bridge of Ariwarano Narikira,
I saw that the waters were purple
With the floating leaves of maples.

DESOLATION

Under the plum-blossoms are nightingales;
But the sea is hidden in an egg-white mist,
And they are silent.

SUNSHINE

The pool is edged with the blade-like leaves of irises.
If I throw a stone into the placid water,
It suddenly stiffens
Into rings and rings
Of sharp gold wire.

ILLUSION

Walking beside the tree-peonies,
I saw a beetle
Whose wings were of black lacquer spotted with milk.
I would have caught it,
But it ran from me swiftly
And hid under the stone lotus
Which supports the statue of Buddha.

AMY LOWELL

A YEAR PASSES

Beyond the porcelain fence of the pleasure-garden,
I hear the frogs in the blue-green rice-fields;
But the sword-shaped moon
Has cut my heart in two.

A LOVER

If I could catch the green lantern of the firefly
I could see to write you a letter.

TO A HUSBAND

Brighter than fireflies upon the Uji River
Are your words in the dark, Beloved.

THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE

When I am alone,
The wind in the pine trees
Is like the shuffling of waves
Upon the wooden sides of a boat.

FROM CHINA

I thought: —
The moon,
Shining upon the many steps of the palace before me,
Shines also upon the chequered rice-fields
Of my native land.
And my tears fell
Like white rice grains
At my feet.

THE POND

Cold, wet leaves
Floating on moss-coloured water,
And the croaking of frogs —
Cracked bell-notes in the twilight.

AUTUMN

All day long I have watched the purple vine-leaves
Fall into the water.
And now in the moonlight they still fall,
But each leaf is fringed with silver.

EPHEMERA

Silver-green lanterns tossing among windy branches:
So an old man thinks
Of the loves of his youth.

DOCUMENT

The great painter Hokusai,
In his old age,
Wrote these words:

"Profiting by a beautiful Spring day,
In this year of tranquillity,
To warm myself in the sun,
I received a visit from my publisher
Who asked me to do something for him.
Then I reflected that one should not forget the glory of arms,
Above all when one was living in peace;
And in spite of my age,
Which is more than seventy years,
I have found courage to draw those ancient heroes
Who have been the models of glory."

THE EMPEROR'S GARDEN

Once, in the sultry heats of Midsummer,
An Emperor caused the miniature mountains in his garden
To be covered with white silk,
That so crowned
They might cool his eyes
With the sparkle of snow.

ONE OF THE "HUNDRED VIEWS OF FUJI" BY HOKUSAI

Being thirsty,
I filled a cup with water,
And, behold! Fuji-yama lay upon the water
Like a dropped leaf!

DISILLUSION

A scholar,
Weary of erecting the fragile towers of words,
Went on a pilgrimage to Asama-yama.
And seeing the force of the fire
Spouting from this mighty mountain
Hurled himself into its crater
And perished.

PAPER FISHES

The paper carp,
At the end of its long bamboo pole,
Takes the wind into its mouth
And emits it at its tail.
So is man,
Forever swallowing the wind.

MEDITATION

A wise man,
Watching the stars pass across the sky,
Remarked:
In the upper air the fireflies move more slowly.

THE CAMELLIA TREE OF MATSUE

At Matsue,
There was a Camellia Tree of great beauty,
Whose blossoms were white as honey wax
Splashed and streaked with the pink of fair coral.
At night,
When the moon rose in the sky,

The Camellia Tree would leave its place
By the gateway
And wander up and down the garden,
Trailing its roots behind it
Like a train of rustling silk.
The people in the house,
Hearing the scrape of them upon the gravel,
Looked out into the garden
And saw the tree,
With its flowers erect and peering,
Pressed against the shōji.
Many nights the tree walked about the garden,
Until the women and children
Became frightened,
And the Master of the house
Ordered that the tree be cut down.
But when the gardener brought his axe
And struck at the trunk of the tree,
There spouted forth a stream of dark blood ;
And when the stump was torn up,
The hole quivered like an open wound.

THE END

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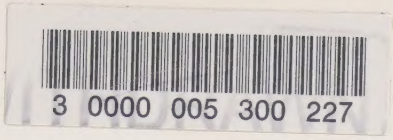

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